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**IMPACT OF DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING (DCM) ON CUSTOMERS' ONLINE  
PURCHASING BEHAVIOR**

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Abstract <p>This study aims to understand how digital contents are acting as a motivating factor to influence on customers online purchasing behavior as well as online purchasing process. More clearly this study will understand and analyze the phenomenon closely on how digital contents are influencing customers into customers five stages of the online purchasing process.</p> <p>The theoretical framework is formed during the study which is based on the findings of previous researches related to digital content marketing and online purchasing behavior.</p> <p>The research is conducted on the qualitative method where semi-structured interview is applied for data collection. The target age group for data collection is 25 to 34 who purchase mostly electronic products from the online marketplace. The empirical analysis is done based on abductive reasoning approach.</p> <p>The finding of the study shows that digital contents affect on customers online purchasing process. The research also found that the right structure and strategy should be applied to create and distribute digital content which engages customers towards digital contents and motivate them to rely on digital contents into the online purchasing decision-making process.</p> <p>Finally, the study showed theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and suggestions for further research regarding digital contents.</p>			
Keywords digital content marketing, online purchasing behavior, online purchasing process			
Additional information			

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Digital content marketing (DCM) is a technique of inbound marketing (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The ultimate objective of DCM is to create awareness about the brand (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Baltes, 2015) among customers rather than only trying to sell products or services (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) which, as a result, ensures to build long-term business relationship and convert them as loyal customers (Baltes, 2015). DCM concentrates on maintaining two-way communication between the company and its customers by creating value and making them educated about the brands through the distribution of contents into different mediums, such as blogs, podcast, newsletter, eBooks and so on (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

The number of worldwide active internet users are more than 4 billion (The Nielsen Company, 2018-a; Statista, 2019), where 85% of them spend around 6 hours per day on average online (The Nielsen Company, 2018-a). Also, around 90% of the total internet users use the internet through mobile devices (The Nielsen Company, 2018-a). The practice of DCM is getting uprising day by day along with the increasing number of internet users. Surprisingly, Digital marketers advertising campaigns are getting more expensive day by day because of the rise of Ad Blocking users, which is resulting in low customers engagement. That is why DCM will play a pivotal role to engage customers through storytelling instead of advertising of products or services only (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2016). The most positive side of DCM is that it can reach more audience by reducing marketing costs for creating customers engagement, which is 62% less, compared to others digital and conventional marketing strategies and it generates three times more sales lead (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Besides this, with the advancement of the technology and widespread accessibility of the internet, the concept of online shopping is changed than before. Previously people used to do online transaction only for purchasing tickets, booking hotels and other few activities. However, at present people are preferring most of the transactions in the online environment from consumer goods (such as food, electronic items, apparels, cosmetics and so on) to industrial products. Dhanapal, Vashu & Subramaniam (2015) found that around 10% of the world's population purchased at least once from the e-

commerce platform. In 2017, global online sales were around 10% of the total retail sales (eMarketer, 2018) which is expected to achieve the milestone of 18% by 2021 (The Nielsen Company, 2018-a). Interestingly, around 59% of the transactions were done through mobile devices (eMarketer, 2018).

As DCM practice and online purchasing behavior among digital marketers and consumers are growing day by day, this is pretty interesting to analyze and find out the relationship between these two areas. Thus, this research aims at understanding the impact of DCM on consumers online purchasing behavior.

### **1.1 Background of the research and research topic justification**

The concept of marketing is changing because of the change in consumers taste and choice. American Marketing Association (AMA) (2013), defined marketing as,

*“Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”*

Philip Kotler also described the evolution of Marketing, through the publication of Marketing 3.0 (2010) and Marketing 4.0 (2016), which are different from each other and showed the real marketing scenario of changing in consumer behavior into the phase of time. Kotler explained how the practice of marketing is changed from time to time, for example – product-oriented marketing (1.0) to customer-centered (2.0) to human-centered marketing (3.0) and finally in Marketing 4.0 the practice is related to social media and digital marketing where customer is the king for the purchasing decision making (Krauss, 2018).

Based on the interview of Kotler regarding Marketing 4.0, traditional marketing practice was one-way communication based where the customer did not have the crucial role, but modern marketing is two-way communication where the customer can interact with each other regarding product choice because of the connectivity through technological advancement (Krauss, 2018). So, marketers should adapt to the changing

nature of customers journey for the real-time interaction with customers which can be digital, traditional or both (Kotler et al., 2016). The market of the modern age is very dynamic where the customer has control over the market to decide the product and channel choice (Krauss, 2018).

To follow the dynamic nature of consumer behavior, researchers are focusing more and more on consumer behavior in the digital platform. Cummins, Peltier, Schibrowsky & Nill (2014) conducted a literature review to identify the total number of published journals and articles related to consumer behavior in 8 different categories from 1993 to 2012. From the study of Cummins et al. (2014), it was found that the most researched fields were related to i) cognitive issues – to engage customers in the e-commerce platform and ii) User Generated Contents (UGC) - to see the effect of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and building trust for online purchasing decision making process respectively. Marketing activities in the online platform are a complicated process to understand consumers attitude, belief and intention to motivate and transform them from physical store to the online marketplace for product or service to meet customers' needs (Cummins et al., 2014). Moreover, the situation is getting more complex day by day because of the frequent communication among consumers in the digital platform (Krauss, 2018). Based on Marketing 4.0, DCM will play the key role to engage customers through storytelling, and the concept of the market will form global perspective because of the emergence of the internet and online shopping (Kotler et al., 2016). However, to create engaging and quality content, there should have well-planned strategies for the digital marketers which will facilitate the best customer experience for online shopping environment. So, deep understanding is needed to cope with the rapid changes in consumers behavior in the digital age.

Most of the research conducted previously focused often on the importance and impact of content marketing (both digital and offline content marketing) in general from several perspective (Simon, 2016; Liu, Karahanna & Watson, 2011; Baltes, 2015; Sashi, 2012; Hsu, Chuan-Chuan Lin, Chiang, 2013; Hsu, Yu, Chang, 2017; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Cheung & Thadani, 2012) but did not directly focus on DCM from B2C perspective. Previous research which focused on DCM some were from Business to Business (B2B) perspective (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) and some others were from



B2C perspective (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Rowley, 2008; Blackman, 2016), but did not show the link directly on online purchasing behavior and the purchasing process of consumers in the online perspective. As there is a gap of those research areas and both of the research areas are trendy in the concept of modern digital marketing age, this research will focus on the impact of DCM from the perspective of B2C on consumers online purchasing behavior.

Besides this, most of the recent studies related to eWOM were in quantitative research method (Cummins et al., 2014). However, according to Rodríguez-Ardura, Ryan & Gretzel (2012), Qualitative research is effective for the better understanding of consumer behavior especially in the online environment through in-depth analysis compared to quantitative research method. However, recently Rodríguez-Ardura et al. (2012) noticed the interest of using qualitative method is growing among researchers (such as Croome, Lawley & Sharma, 2010) for the deep understanding of the online consumer behavior.

For the purchasing process, Kotler's 5 stage purchasing process is useful to understand consumers purchasing behavior which helps business organizations to monitor customers purchasing stages and decision making in each stage (Kotler & Keller, 2012:166).

## **1.2 Aim of the research and questions of the research**

This research aims to understand how DCM strategies are affecting customers online purchasing behavior. To be more specific, this research will justify, the right strategy of DCM that influence customers online purchasing by making them engaged. It will also define customers online purchasing process and online purchasing behavior that will help digital marketers to apply new strategies to build a strong long-term business relationship with customers. To achieve the goal of this research, the main question will create a better understanding about several types of digital content marketing that will ultimately help the marketers to create more conversions by dealing with whole customers journey in online purchasing decision making. The main research question is,

*How several types of digital contents create positive impact on online purchasing behavior?*

The term ‘positive impact’ has different meaning from DCM and online purchasing perspective. From DCM perspective, the strategy that will motivate customers to trust and rely on digital contents. Again, from the online purchasing perspective, the increasing interest of customers to select an eCommerce platform for the purchasing activities. So, in this research, the term positive impact refers to the increasing interests of customers into online marketplaces for making their purchasing activities, where digital content marketing will play as the motivating factor to trust on digital channels of the company.

To explain the main research question, there are four sub-questions. The first sub-question helps to identify the essential elements of the digital contents that will be able to achieve business goals by following the right structure of the digital contents. This question will also focus on figuring out the primary elements of the contents that is essential to bring the sales of the product in the online marketplace.

*What are the core elements of digital content?*

The second sub-question will identify the types of contents that attract customers more. Ultimately it will help digital marketers to produce and publish effective contents that will generate more sales revenue and will help to create long-term business relationships with customers by fulfilling their needs.

*What type of content(s) create more engagement?*

The third sub-question will show the strategies to gain audience trust so that customers will be convinced based on the contents from trusted sources and finally will consume the product for need satisfaction.

*How type of contents motivates customers to gain trust?*

The fourth and final sub-question will discuss the process of online purchasing that customers follow to find their desired products.

*What is the process of online purchasing decision making?*

### **1.3 Definition of the research key concepts**

For a better understanding of this research terms, the most relevant key concepts are defined here.

*Content Marketing:* As previously stated, Content marketing is a part of Inbound marketing which not only discourages positively for sending brand-centric contents to sell the product but also encourages to concentrate on creating customer-centric contents to meet customer needs (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The same source also mentioned that content marketing focuses on storytelling to solve customers' problem by offering valuable contents instead of just sharing product information.

Content Marketing Institute (CMI) (n.d.), One of the leading global educational and training organization for content marketing, defined Content Marketing as –

*“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”*

*Digital Content Marketing (DCM):* According to Hollebeek & Macky (2019), DCM can be defined as the medium of relationship marketing between customers and the business organization which creates perception, engagement, loyalty and trustworthiness among the customers about the brand to increase sales leads of the company through understanding and fulfilling customer needs by sharing related contents in the online platform. The definition of Rowley (2008) also indicated to the same concept, DCM can be defined as the managerial process where customers' needs are identified, anticipated and satisfied through the electronic medium to maintain a valuable relationship.

*Online purchasing behavior:* In general purchasing behavior refers to the intention, evaluation, and action of purchasing products or services to meet a particular need. The consumer can be an individual or any group of consumers or any business organization. From this research perspective According to Kotler & Armstrong (2018:158),

*“Consumer buyer behavior refers to the buying behavior of final consumers—individuals and households that buy goods and services for personal consumption.”*

In the context of the online platform, consumers purchasing behavior depends on several key factors such as trust, product quality, data security, information availability, product price, and warranty. All of these determinants are related to Kotler’s five-stage of the buying process where customers used to search information based on the needs, compared products from different channels and choose the right product to fulfill the demand.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

This research will be conducted on the qualitative method as the aim of this research is to understand, analyze and show the phenomenon of how DCM is affecting consumers online purchasing behavior. According to Daymon & Holloway (2011), Qualitative research methods are useful to get in-depth, complex and holistic understanding of the relationship. Besides this, Rodríguez-Ardura et al. (2012) think that qualitative research might be the key elements for the researchers to co-create value for the customers to cope with the rapid development of digitalization, social media, and e-commerce platform.

The theoretical framework will be formed during this study where the results of previous researches related to DCM and purchasing behavior will assist in forming the theoretical framework. The formed theoretical framework will be applied to prepare questions and collect data from the consumers through conducting the semi-structured interview. Because according to Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2016:388), Semi-

structured interview is useful when it is essential to understand the attitude, opinion, and reason behind a decision of the targeted group. As this research area will work on the understanding of consumers purchasing decision making in the online platform and motivating factors of DCM, it will be wise to conduct the semi-structured interview method for the data collection. Finally, the data gathered from the interview will be analyzed through empirical analysis to show the research findings.

### **1.5 Structure of the research**

This study is categorized into three different parts, such as the theoretical framework, data analysis, and conclusion respectively.

Chapter two and three focuses on the theoretical part where chapter two focuses on the theoretical framework on consumers online purchasing decision and chapter three focuses on the impact of digital content marketing. First, both chapters will show the theoretical framework individually in each area and later on it will present the framework for the combination of online purchasing and digital content marketing. In the second chapter, this research will show customers attitude towards online purchasing, online purchasing process. On the other hand, the third chapter will focus on digital content marketing, essential elements of content, effective content strategy for customer engagement and trust.

In the fourth and fifth chapter, research method and empirical analysis of the interview data will be presented respectively. In chapter four, the justification for conducting qualitative research, selection of targeted group for data collection will be presented. Whereas, in the next chapter it will represent the data collected from the interview along with the justification through empirical analysis. As a result, the thoughts, feelings, and expectations of the users can easily be identified through conducting the interview which will help to show the result of the research.

Finally, in the last chapter of the research, it will be presented research result with the answer of the research questions, theoretical contribution, managerial application, limitation study and future research opportunities in this research area.

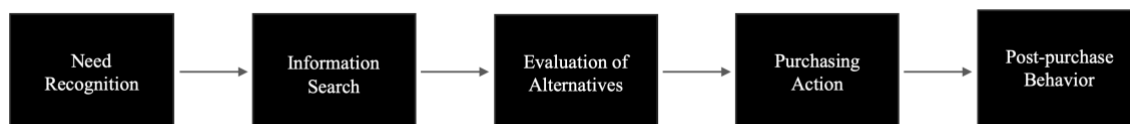
## **2 ONLINE PURCHASING DECISION**

In this chapter, consumer purchase intention and behavior in the online platform will be analyzed and customers online purchasing process will be specified based on the discussion of earlier studies.

### **2.1 Purchasing process of customers**

Purchasing process refers to the whole journey of a customer that starts from the recognition of the needs and lasts till the experience even after purchasing of the product or service. According to Munthiu (2009), The buying process represents one's motivation, attitude and decision-making process for a product or service. However, the purchasing process of a customer differs from product to product and level of engagement with that product which is getting complicated day by day (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:174). That is why, marketers have to follow customers journey to identify and evaluate customers purchasing process correctly (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 166).

Comegys, Hannula & Väisänen, (2006) found that Kotler's five-stage purchasing process is considered as the ideal one which helps marketers to take right initiatives for the interaction with customers. According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 166), customers purchasing process starts long-time earlier than customers actual purchasing action which lasts long after the product consumption experience. So, it is considered that customers usually go through the five stages of purchasing process which are – Need recognition, Information search, Evaluation of alternatives, purchasing action and post-purchase behavior (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 166; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:175). That is why Munthiu (2009) stated that marketers need to have an in-depth understanding of all five stages so that it becomes easier to offer the best customer experience through the product or service.



**Figure 1. Customers' purchasing process (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 166; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:175)**

## **2.2 Online purchasing behavior**

The advancement of the internet has taken online shopping behavior into the revolutionary stage both for sellers and customers (Dhanapal et al., 2015; Ling, Chai & Piew, 2010). According to Hsu, Yu & Chang (2017), The numbers of the online purchaser are growing faster each year because of the popularity of smart devices and easier access to the information over the internet. However, doing transactions in the online platform is different and riskier than the local marketplace even though a customer is purchasing same product from both platforms (Kim & Song, 2010; Ling et al., 2010; Pappas, 2016). A customer has to interact with the virtual world through the interface of the website to do the purchasing activities in the online platform (Kim & Song, 2010; Thirumalai & Sinha, 2011), which is raising the trust and security issues to complete the transaction successfully (Ling et al., 2010). The marketer should apply new strategies to understand consumers behavior properly in the e-commerce platform (Ling et al., 2010).

Website retailers are trying to figure out the strategies to make customers more engaged in the e-commerce platform to increase the number of sales (Dhanapal et al., 2015). Moon, Khalid, Awan, Attiq, Rasool & Kiran (2017) think that easy to use website interface, adequate product information, product coupon or price discount on occasional events attract more customers to the retailer website. However, Pappas (2016) thinks that consumers tend to purchase from those sellers who offer higher quality product and lower risk for data security. So, some key factors affect customers online purchasing behavior, such as purchasing intention, trust, the reputation of the company, website usability, customer reviews and so on.

*Purchasing intention* is considered as an element of cognitive behavior of an individual who has an expectation and takes the initiative to purchase a product from a specific brand. (Ling et al., 2010). According to Limbu, Wolf & Lunsford (2012), online purchasing intention refers to the willingness and interest of consumers to perform a transaction in a website platform regarding a product or service.

*Trust* represents the interest of consumers to do the interaction with the company from the positive expectation regarding the reliability of the product or service quality (Limbu et al., 2012; Pappas, 2016). According to Kim & Song (2010) and Limbu et al. (2012), trust is evaluated as one of the most crucial factors for the success of an online marketplace, where consumers share their confidential information for the transaction regarding a product or service. Besides this, Limbu et al. (2012) found that privacy policy and data security are the most crucial factors for the trust of the website. However, Pappas (2016) suggested that online retailers should focus on the branding of both product and online sales channel which helps to build trust among customers.

Limbu et al. (2012) mentioned that, along with privacy and security issue, *the reputation of the company*, such as branding, product quality, warranty and return policy (Pappas, 2016), after-sales support (Pappas, 2016) inspire consumers to purchase and revisit the company website for future purchase. Based on the study of Pappas (2016), online retailers are now focusing more on repeat purchase through building loyalty with customers. Besides this, Limbu et al. (2012) also mentioned that companies ethical practice regarding product quality and data security would help to build a loyal business relationship.

Moreover, *the usability of the website*, such as easier and faster order processing, loading speed, presentation of the data, navigation of the website, availability, and accessibility of the product information plays a supporting role for the engagement of the customers (Limbu et al., 2012; Pappas, 2016). Kim & Song (2010) suggested that, to engage customers to the eCommerce platform the website manager or retailer should respond to the consumer regarding Q&A, keep the promise of quality product with on-time delivery and offer reliable support in every stage of purchasing process, so that it creates positive impact for the consumers to gain trust. Limbu et al. (2012) found that



the website should allow users to decide either save or not their personal and finance related information which will reduce the risk of leaking confidential data. Limbu et al. (2012) also suggested that the privacy policy of the website should be clearly understandable so that consumers can be aware of the use case and the security of their information in the website which will help consumers to decide whether to do the transaction or not.

Because of the engagement of customers into several digital and social media platform, *customer reviews* are also an emerging factor that helps to select the retailers' channel in the online environment. According to Kim & Song (2010), eWOM is considered as one of the most important factors that directly influence consumers purchasing intention and behavior. That is why consumers depend on the WOM from other consumers to get reliable information that will reduce the risk for the transaction in the online platform (Kim & Song, 2010). However, If the quality of the customer review is less helpful, then the uncertainty raises which reduce the possibility of sales (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010).

### **2.3 Customers' online purchasing process**

The tendency of purchasing products from online platform among customer in this age is growing day by day. Some researcher stated that doing transaction in the eCommerce platform is beneficial for a faster and smooth transaction, interaction, checking and comparing product information, and finally to choose the right product for final consumption (Dhanapal et al., 2015; Ling et al., 2010). On the other hand, some researchers are saying that doing online transaction is riskier than the traditional face to face local market interaction (Kim & Song, 2010; Ling et al., 2010; Pappas, 2016). eCommerce platform is interactive by nature (Ling et al., 2010) and the transaction pattern of this market is different from the traditional face to face interactive local market (Pappas, 2016). That means the attitude, behavior, and experience of these market differs.

According to Mudambi & Schuff (2010), Customers can make the purchase decision faster if they have easy access to the information about the quality of the product,

seller's quality and the availability of the alternative products for comparison which helps into the several stages of the purchasing process. Powers, Advincula, Austin, Graiko & Snyder (2012) pointed out that customers purchasing journey differs by product, risk or reward. So, a digital marketer should understand the purchasing process of a customer from the online perspective so that setting strategy for the customer's engagement in the eCommerce platform becomes easier by overcoming risks and uncertainties.

Since Kotler's five-stage of purchasing behavior is considered as the base, so this research will use those process for online perspective also. Comegys et al. (2006) think that the purchasing environment might have been changed, customers need might be changed, but the purchasing pattern did not change that much. So, using the five-stage model will be beneficial here so that the collaboration between the online and offline environment will give a clear picture of how a customer's purchasing process works from the online perspective.

### 2.3.1 Need Recognition

The purchasing process starts with the awareness of the consumer to fulfill any needs. The need or problem can be raised either from internal stimuli (such as basic need, social need and so on) or from external stimuli (such as eWOM, company advertisement regarding a new product with benefit or emotional attachment) (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 167). Moustakas (2015) found that external factors and internal analysis help a customer to choose a channel as well as a brand. So, Loyalty on a brand plays the role for need, for example, new innovative product introduction in the market, that goes side by side with the need and trend.

To get engaged in the need recognition stage, the marketers do the market research, monitor on the trend that may convert as the need, analyze the competitors' activities so that competitive advantage can be gained. Based on the research and analysis, marketers can share contents or information into several digital media platforms related to the product that can solve customers' problem and offer some extra benefits.

### 2.3.2 Information Search

Information search is the second stage of consumers online purchasing process. The interactive nature of online marketplace helps a customer to find out the product information and compare the price of the product in the different marketplace no matter what the geographical location of the market is (Ling et al., 2010).

There are several sources to collect information, such as personal source, commercial source and so on (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 167; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:176). Traditional customers usually got information from commercial sources provided by marketers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:176). However, now customers tend to search for information into several platforms of the internet such as blogs, forums, review sharing websites, eCommerce platforms, and social media websites (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Pappas, 2016). Because, eWOM plays a significant impact on consumers purchasing decision process where one consumer shares information about a product or service for the prospect customers based on their consumption experience (Kim & Song, 2010; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:176). That is why the daily number of visits to the review websites (such as BuzzFeed, Yelp, Amazon, TripAdvisor, BestBuy) is increasing surprisingly. Interestingly Powers et al. (2012) mentioned that some customers search for the information in online, offline or even both sources especially for purchasing automotive and electronic products. As a result, collecting information from several sources will raise brand awareness among customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:177).

Among all these positive sides of searching for information on the online platform, there are some risks for the business organization. Karimi (2013) mentioned that the excessive amount of information is making customers' confused to evaluate and select the right information; as a result, customers' skip the platform and choose the alternative option. So digital marketers' should monitor several sources to ensure the smooth flow of the information.

### 2.3.3 Evaluation of Alternatives

In the third stage, the customer starts to compare and reduce the alternatives to go to the purchasing decision. Evaluation refers to the capability of information processing among customers' which will help to choose the best one to fulfill their needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:177). Consumers' usually evaluate a product or service from several points of view also from several sources. Kotler & Armstrong (2018:177) mentioned that the duration of evaluation varies based on the person and product type. However, there are some vital factors to evaluate a product, such as the quality of the information, the usability of the website, product quality, and the price of the product. (Croome et al., 2010; Pappas, 2016).

Nowadays, several websites introduced comparing feature so that customers' can evaluate the product in a very short moment. Kim & Song (2010) argued that the website navigation and usability should be easier like the local shop. As a result, customers' will be able to find the product information without struggling in less effort and time to compare related products and chose the best product for the final purchasing.

Kotler & Armstrong (2018:177) suggested that, as customers' have several evaluation criteria, marketers' should analyze and deeply understand customers' evaluation process to influence on their final purchasing decision.

### 2.3.4 Purchase Intention

Stage four of the purchasing process is a crucial moment for customers and also for the retailers. Because after close evaluation of several alternatives, customers finally intend to purchase the product for final consumption. Croome et al. (2010) mentioned some essential elements of this stage, such as privacy policies, available payment methods, transaction costs and so on.

According to Pappas (2016), Pricing and product quality are the two most vital elements for consumer's purchase decision. The statement goes with Thirumalai &

Sinha (2011) perfectly, but Thirumalai & Sinha (2011) also focused on the easier purchasing process of the website which helps to keep customers interest to complete purchasing action.

However, during this purchasing decision stage sometimes customers' leave the website without completing the transaction for the product. Kotler & Armstrong (2018:177) mentioned that customers' purchase intention does not always ensure the actual purchasing action. Researchers' found some reasons behind the abortion of the shopping cart. For example, according to Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) and Thirumalai & Sinha (2011), consumers' abort the purchasing task if the website's purchasing process is complex and the interaction of customer support is lower. However, Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) also added that customers' might also abandon the shopping cart if the total order cost (including product price and shipping cost) is higher than the expectation. Besides this, the same source also found that non-buying behavior occurs because of the tendency of finding the alternative retailers with the lower price, creating a watch list for the tracking of future promotional offers and the intention of future purchase.

If the customer decides not to go forward for the purchasing task, then the customer needs to search the alternative products again which matches best based on the criteria of the customer needs, such as product price, shipping issue, product brand and quality, and so on. So, logically the purchasing process starts again from the evaluation of the alternative stage.

So, marketers should work on creating the best customer experience to avoid customers non-buying behavior on the web platform. Kukar-Kinney & Close (2010) suggested that the retailer should keep a flat shipping cost where the number of ordered products does not matter. The same source also suggested that to complete customers action, specifically from shopping cart to purchasing action, the retailer can send some promotional offer through the discount code in the email of the customer which will motivate them to make an immediate purchase. Besides this, to gain the competitive advantage over the competitors, the retailer should ensure a better-quality product,

personalized website interface for the users and above all the purchasing experience which is responsive to the customers (Thirumalai & Sinha, 2011).

### 2.3.5 Post-purchase Behavior

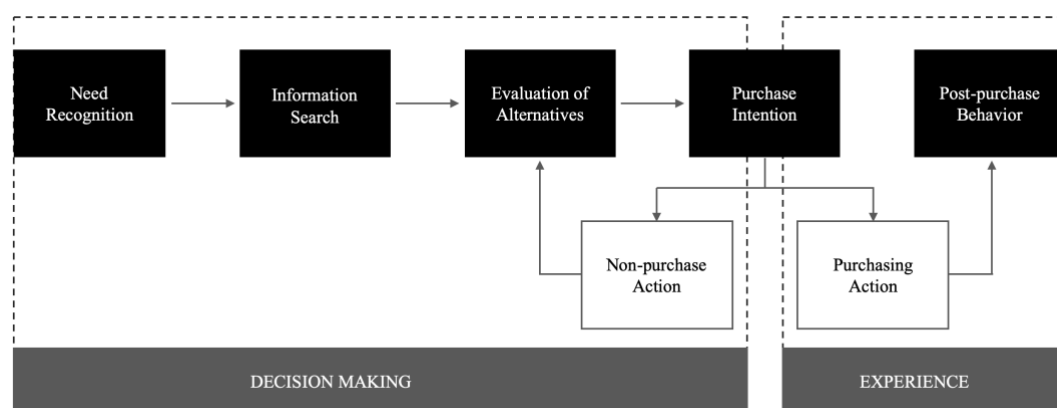
Comegys et al. (2006) and Munthiu (2009) stated that after taking the purchase action the customer journey is not finished yet, the last stage is all about customer experience and marketers have to deal with the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the customers. Based on the study of Croome et al. (2010), post-purchase behavior stage includes product delivery, customer support after the purchase of the product related to warranty and any technical difficulties. Indeed, the satisfaction level depends on all of these supports which will convert the customer as a loyal customer and will motivate to repurchase the product from the same brand as well as the same platform (Croome et al. 2010).

Though purchasing environment differs from the online and offline marketplace, to offer better customer experience in the web platform, Thirumalai & Sinha (2011) suggested some fundamental techniques. For example, offering a personal feeling to the customer by greeting his/her name when a customer logged in to the account, showing related products based on the search and preference, anytime update option regarding personal and shipment related information, tracking option till the final delivery of the product and of course, technical or advisory support related to the product to ensure the best satisfaction.

Comegys et al. (2006) suggested that the marketer should work on understanding consumers post-purchasing behavior to maintain a long-term business relationship. Because, Kotler & Armstrong (2018:177) stated, satisfied customers' will spread positive eWOM whereas dissatisfied customers will spread negative. Based on the study of Karimi (2013), cross-channel (either online or offline or both) is possible for online customers and the collaboration of service will make help the marketer to offer satisfaction to the customers. Ultimately, customers' brand experience and preference have an impact on repurchase intention and activities.

Based on the study of Thirumalai & Sinha (2011), the purchasing process of customers can be classified into two phases, such as i) Decision-making phase and ii) Experience phase. Decision-making phase is considered as the research phase where customers' are always gathering information regarding product or service or even retailers. In this phase, customers' evaluate and decide for the final purchasing decision. However, the journey of this phase includes, need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives. On the other hand, Experience phase refers to customers' real experience regarding the product or service that is already purchased. In this phase, customers gather experience based on the purchased product and after-sales service form the company regarding any further support. Later on, customers share the experience into several platforms which either motivate new customers or raise questions regarding the reliability issue of the eCommerce platform. Here, post-purchase behavior is categorized into experience phase. However, purchasing intention goes between those two-phase, because still there are some uncertainties of customers' related to purchasing decision. If customers' get back to the third stage, it goes to the decision-making journey, and if customers' go to the purchasing action, it will go to the experience phase.

So, customers' online purchasing process is shown in Figure 2 which is adapted based on the study of Kotler's five-stage of the purchasing process.



**Figure 2. online purchasing process (Extended from Kotler's five-stage of buying process).**

### **3 IMPACT OF DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING**

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the strategies of digital contents such as essential content elements, the content structure that attract and motivate customers to maintain long term relationship with the business organization. According to Hollebeek & Macky (2019), DCM plays a significant role to maintain the relationship with existing and prospect customers', where it converts prospect customers into actual customer (either in short-term or long-term) through the engagement of the contents. The main objectives of content marketing are – creating brand awareness, building a loyal relationship with customers by creating trust, creating needs for a product or service which solve customers' problem (Baltes, 2015).

#### **3.1 Digital Content Marketing (DCM):**

The nature of digital media is interactive (Sashi, 2012). Nowadays, the strategies of content publication are getting richer compared to the conventional method (Blackman, 2016), because customers play a significant role along with the business organization to produce and exchange contents to the prospect customers' to share their experience about the brand (Sashi, 2012; Blackman, 2016). However, the co-creation of contents is ultimately affecting the future purchasing decisions of customers', especially in the eCommerce platform. (Sashi, 2012; Blackman, 2016).

#### **3.2 Core elements of digital content marketing**

Pulizzi (2012) said that the biggest challenge for the business organization is to create engaging contents. Nowadays, agile marketing is being practiced more and more where the content managers' use automated software to ensure the quality of digital contents for better engagement with customers (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Even some companies are hiring content writers who can produce the best quality contents to solve customers' problem (Barger, Peltier & Schultz, 2016).

According to Steimle (2014), content can be anything and any format as long as it attracts customers to consume it rather skipping it, which brings value for customers.



Kose & Sert (2016) said that when contents attract customers to meet their needs, then it will be able to gain engagement. Based on a study of Static Brain (2018), it was found that the duration of human attention on average is around 8 seconds. So, it is significant for a digital marketer to grab the attention of the audience as well as the customers in a short time.

There should have been some content policy and structure which will help the business organization to gain competitive advantage through reaching more customers. Content Marketing Association (n.d.) stated that the structure of the contents should be responsive, especially mobile friendly (Barysevich, 2017), to fit digital devices so that the interest of users can be kept. So, the key components to produce structured digital contents are – Identifying target audience, well-documented plan, Storytelling of the content theme, Attractive title, Visual elements, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) friendly keywords, Distribution friendly policy, Call to Action (CTA). Here identifying the target audience and well-documented plan will play the role of research or policy-making which will help the digital content marketer to set the perfect structure of the digital contents.

*Identifying the target audience:* Target audience is also known as the persona of the audience. Content Marketing Association (n.d.) stated that the content should create value for the audience which will ensure the engagement with the content. The content marketing plan will specify the target audience for whom the content will be produced. Types, message and distribution channel will vary based on the target audience such as age, culture, profession, sex, geographical location, language and so on. Bhargava (2016) mentioned that the contents should be produced based on the customers need and interest so that it can solve customers' problem. Besides this, Beets (2018) also stated that the content should be created to educate audiences as well as customers, not for marketing purpose.

*Well documented plan:* A digital content marketing plan is a bird's eye view of the content marketing strategy of a company. A documented plan helps the digital marketer to decide the entire journey of a certain period. Bhargava (2016) mentioned that a documented plan is related to the research, budget for the content creation,

choosing the best content type to produce and finally, the distribution plan through different channels to get more customer engagements. Based on the finding of Beets (2018) on Content Marketing Institute research, 33% of the B2C digital marketers have a documented plan for content marketing strategy which is very crucial for the success of the content marketing.

McGill (2019) suggested that digital marketers should go with the content type that goes best with the company budget and business goal. However, Keith (n.d.) suggested that digital marketers should try to experiment with all types of content to see which one works best for customers engagement. So, a planned strategy helps a digital marketer to follow the journey of a particular time for leading the success of the business.

*Storytelling of the Content theme:* Based on the research Hall (2019) found that blog posts and video contents give more value and make better engagement with the audience. That is why the content message should be created in such a way that represents a story rather than a marketing message of product or service. So, to create story type of contents, digital marketers should keep some guidelines in mind such as content creation language, sentence structure, paragraph style, and other key factors.

Noguti (2016) mentioned that communication language through the contents affects on customer engagement. More specifically, Noguti (2016) suggested that personalized language contents (such as the use of first person “I” to refer the author, second person pronouns to refer users) gets more acceptability to the audience and becomes trustworthy. Because marketing language and personalized language makes a difference to the users’ acceptability. However, the quality and fluency of speaking especially in video content represents the expertise level of the content creator (Noguti, 2016)

The sentence structure should be short to easily understandable (Content Marketing Association, n.d.). Because the audience usually scans the whole content first to see the right information based on their needs. Nielsen (2008) found that users usually read around twenty percent of the total contents in a webpage. However, Content Marketing

Association (n.d.) argued that the length of the content should be based on the needs to make it well described as long as it covers the value for the customer. The same source indicated that, to make the contents quickly readable the structure of the content should be segmented into sub-heading, bullet point list, images, tables, and infographics. Also, less use of punctuation such as – brackets, hyphens, and semi-colons as it does not add that much value to the readers (Content Marketing Association, n.d.).

*Attractive title:* Title is one of the most essential elements of a content whatever the format is. Content Marketing Association (n.d.) mentioned that there should have at least one keyword, of the overall content context, in the title so that the reader gets interest to visit and read the content. The same source also mentioned that the headline should be stand out compared to other available contents so that it appears in the search engine. Barker (2017) found that headlines with eight words, including an odd number and asking questions, get the extra attraction for the audience. However, some powerful words, such as best, top, how to, attract customers more to the content, but it depends on the contents theme to create and publish with the audience.

*Visual elements:* As the span of the attention is shorter (Static Brain, 2018), the right technique to get the attraction of audience is using the visual elements such as images, infographic, illustration. Mawhinney (2019) found that more than 30% of digital marketers use visual elements as one of the most crucial content for the business and 27% of the marketers use visual elements for blogging. Besides this, Barker (2017) found that using visual elements with blog texts are three times more effective than only using text-based contents. Using of related image in the blog post and visualization of the data in the infographic form gets more audience attention. There are some favorite tools available in the online (such as, Piktochart, Canva, Infogram) which will help the content marketer to produce eye-catching visual contents with small or no cost with higher engagement (Hall, 2019; Barker, 2017). Furthermore, as a form of the visual element, Barker (2017) found that video contents are effective for explanation and sharing customer reviews in the video form gets more customer attention.

*SEO friendly keywords:* Search engines are playing an extraordinary role to reach digital contents to the audience (Hollebeek, & Macky, 2019). SEO friendly contents are an asset for a company in the digital platform. However, contents only focusing on keywords is not wise for a content producer. Because, loading speed (Content Marketing Association, n.d.), length (Barysevich, 2017), and the quality (Content Marketing Association, n.d.; Hollebeek, & Macky, 2019) of the content will play the role to get the ranking on search engine.

According to Lin & Yazdanifard (2014), Google is the most popular search engine in the world that comes first in mind to search for any content over the internet. Lin & Yazdanifard (2014) also added that the algorithm of Google, such as Hummingbird, helps the audience to find more focused contents based on the query and ultimately it is helping business by promoting contents through suggesting as related contents. However, Barysevich (2017) mentioned that day by day algorithm is changing, so the marketer should focus on continuous quality content production even though the ranking of the content is satisfying now. Content Marketing Association (n.d.) suggested that keywords should be placed in such a way that covers heading, subheading and also the description of the contents. Content Marketing Association (n.d.) found that the subheading of a blog post is better to scan by search engine bots. Barysevich (2017) found that, among the top 20 search result, more than 50% have keywords on the heading. Furthermore, the responsiveness of the content and up-to-date data structure will help to reach more audience through the search engine (Lauer, 2016).

*Distribution friendliness:* After producing the right structured content, the content marketer should make the content distribution policy. Almost all website has social media sharing widget which helps the audience to share in just a click without any further action.

*CTA & hyperlink:* Content Marketing Association (n.d.) referred that, hyperlinks should be balanced into the article as it engaged readers. Hyperlinks take the audience to other relevant pages of the website sometimes to do further action. Besides this,

invitation CTA such as to subscribe for the newsletter, or to attend any event can be added to create interest of customers for future content richness through email.

### **3.3 Effective content strategies for customers engagement**

The term engagement can be defined as the creation of the experience to create meaningful interaction between the company and stakeholders (Sashi, 2012). So, customers engagement refers to the interaction between a brand and its customer where customers are loyal and emotionally attached to the brand for repeat purchase to fulfill their needs (Sashi, 2012). For better engagement, contents should be easily perceivable, focused on the value of the customers and presented in such a way that appeals to its reader (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Sashi (2012) mentioned that the prerequisites of creating engagement are to build trust and commitment in a relationship where one party can rely on another for the transaction.

Noguti (2016) mentioned that the determinants of contents engagement are who, what, where, how. More specifically who is sending what types of relevant contents to which target audience through which channel. However, Gummerus, Liljander, Pura & Van Riel (2004) think that it is very challenging for the business organization to ensure customer satisfaction and make them as returning customers in the content-based website though there are lots of alternative websites available for the customers to find information and preferred services. That means it is not easy to say precisely which content strategy will make engagement with which group of customers or will the same strategy be applicable for all. According to Baltes (2015), To ensure the successful digital marketing strategy, the organization should ensure the production and distribution of quality content marketing. That is why it is essential for the digital content marketer to focus not only on the content creation but also to the proper distribution of the contents for better engagement with the audience.

#### **3.3.1 Content creation**

Holliman & Rowley (2014) mentioned about two types of content. Such as i) static – which indicates to the contents available on the company website and ii) dynamic –

which indicates to the contents generated by users such as video, blog text, podcast and so on. Hollebeek & Macky (2019) also supported the statement, DCM can not only be generated by the company itself but also consumers, as well as stakeholders, can produce several types of contents, also known as User-generated content, in the eWOM platform to share brand-related information. So, there are two types of Digital contents, such as – i) Brand Generated Content (BGC) and ii) User Generated Content (UGC).

Brand Generated Content (BGC) is also known as Marketer Generated content. BGC refers to the contents created by the business organization from the business channel, such as company website, social media account, blog and so on, to create brand awareness among customers. The interaction mostly happens between the company representative and customers. Digital marketers, especially in B2C areas, used content marketing to raise brand awareness, building trust among customers, educate customers about the brand value, and make loyal customers for long-term business relationships (Beets, 2018; Baltes, 2015). Based on Annual Content Marketing Research 2018 conducted by Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs, Beets (2018) found that 64% of B2C marketers were able to educate and transform prospects to loyal customers through committing on digital content marketing. Besides this Beets (2018) also found that 56% of the digital marketers increased their spending only in B2C content creation over the last 12 months. However, Baltes (2015) suggested B2C digital marketers to focus on content quality, target audience, distribution channel before creating the DCM strategy.

Whereas, User Generated Contents (UGC) are created by professional or non-professional existing, prior or potential customers, who are sharing experience and opinion related to product or service of a brand because of the passion or interest on the brand. UGCs are distributed through several platforms such as online video streaming websites, blogs, podcasts, review websites, discussion forums, social media platforms (Simon, 2016). Simon (2016) also stated that UGCs are making qualitative changes for the interaction among content creators and consumers. Users create and distribute contents from their feelings for a brand, or to get some benefits as a reward of producing contents (such as YouTube and Facebook video content creators get the

revenue from the advertisement shown by several companies), to create influence in the social changes and finally for the recognition in the digital platforms. Blackman (2016) found that UGC publishers (such as bloggers and YouTubers) are creating a great engagement between contents and consumers. But, users pick trustworthy authors based on the professionalism for the content production and the level of discussion of the content among other users (Blackman, 2016).

Contents, generated either from customers or the company, are playing the role of eWOM in the digital platform. Because eWOM spreads three times faster than the traditional method of promotion of a product or service whether it is negative or positive (Smith, 2012). According to Filieri (2016), eWOM can be defined as a statement that is either negative or positive shared by actual or potential customers or stakeholders regarding a product or service through online platform (such as blog, third-party content sharing website, review sharing website, eCommerce platform or even the company website) to show their feeling or experience to other consumers. However, Lin, Lu & Wu (2012) suggested that the presentation and format of the content should be logical, clear, consistent, unbiased and maintain a style of uniqueness that helps customers to remember differently and maintain emotional attachment among them.

Erkan & Evans (2016) stated that among huge platforms of sharing eWOM, it is difficult to answer whether all the contents are acceptable to consumers for making their purchasing decision or not. According to Scholz, Dorner, Landherr & Probst (2013), consumers are accepting UGCs as more trustworthy rather than BGCs for making their final purchase decision. There are several forms of digital contents, such as text, video, review, visual element, question and answer (Q&A), article, e-book, whitepaper, news and so on (Pulizzi, 2012; Kose & Sert, 2016). So, getting familiar with those contents will help the digital marketer to understand the situation. However, to set the right strategy to create engaging contents and distribute those contents to attain the business goal in the digital platform is highly complex and competitive. According to Beets (2018), content marketers mostly use storytelling for the content marketing strategy where mostly used contents are audio-visual content (such as

video), written digital contents (such as blogs and articles), and images (such as infographic, GIFs).

Here most commonly used digital content types are described.

*Text-based content or Text-blog:* Text-based contents are shared by both marketers and users who are engaged with the desired brand. Usually, text-based contents are commonly known as blogging. Producing text-based content as well as blogging costs less with higher output. The widely used platform of sharing text-based contents are personal blogs, social media (such as Facebook, Reddit, Quora), company blog/website and even any third-party website (such as Medium). Most commonly produced text-based contents are articles, case studies, how to guides, Q&As, customer reviews and so on. According to Ling et al. (2010), Blogging is an excellent platform for eWOM where bloggers share information about the product or service. Research by MGDA (2014) showed that 70% of the total customers are interested in reading blog-based contents to know details of the product. Besides this, blog contents are options to improve the SEO of the website which will bring more traffic as well as new customers (Standberry, 2018). Burnes (2018) found that business website included blogging can bring 55% more visitor and around 450% page index for the search engine of the web page. According to Standberry (2018), blogging is effective for low budget and short-form of content marketing.

*Video:* Jayasingh, Thiruvankadam & Arunkumar (2018) found that video format content gets more customer engagement compared to other digital contents. Based on the research of Google (n.d.-a) four out five people watch videos online to learn new things. The same source also stated that around 50% of the shoppers decide to buy a product by watching online video. Such as – unboxing video, searching for the review of a specific brand (Google, n.d.-b). Business organizations are producing videos to share products promo, interviews from the customers about the products benefit and review, production process of the product. Customers are also producing videos to share products review, the usability of the product, unboxing videos. Standberry (2018) found that video content is quickly engaging content with customers.



*Infographic:* Infographic is another form of visual content marketing. According to Standberry (2018), infographics are mostly used to represent statistics or data into graph, chart or any other form of visualization rather than just writing in texts which ensures better understanding with the data. Images are processed faster in the human brain. That is why infographic contents get the attention of users faster. Digital marketers usually share company overview, products feature, statistics, journey map, vision, and others process to make it attractive to the customers or stakeholders.

*Gifs:* Gifs are one of the popular contents shared in the internet today (Standberry, 2018). Gifs are animated contents shared into several platforms including blogs, email to share fun and grab attention among audiences.

*Customer Reviews:* Consumer reviews in the online platform are getting popular for the consumers purchasing decision (Filieri, 2016). Customer reviews in the electronic platform can be defined as part of the eWOM where customers share their opinion and experience in the vendor or product retailer website which is either positive or negative (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Liu et al., 2011). According to Mudambi & Schuff (2010), customer reviews are the initiatives of adding value for prospect customers to compare and evaluate alternatives during the product purchasing process. That means customer reviews are being considered as an ideal option to know about product quality (Liu et al., 2011). Chen, Fay & Wang (2011) also think that the quality of the product has a positive relationship with the product review where price does not affect to choose the product. Because based on the research of CompUSA-iPerception that 81% of the customers read customers review to plan a purchase decision form several alternatives of the product and 63% customers decide to purchase from a website if they have customer reviews in the website (Liu et al., 2011).

Nowadays, customers can easily provide review into an eCommerce platform (such as Amazon, AliExpress), third-party review websites (yelp), social media channels (such as Facebook page) with logical evidence. Smith (2012) mentioned that review form customers have the possibility of reaching thousands of prospect customers. Zhu & Zhang (2010) found that online review brings more leads even if it is a (less popular) niche product because consumers get information about the product which saves

customers searching time and ultimately influences customers to make their purchasing decision in the online market.

The trend of trustworthiness on consumer feedback is rising day by day which is heavily influencing other prospect customers buying decision (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). However, Lin et al. (2012) found that to cope with the trend, digital marketers are influencing consumers directly or indirectly to post feedback on their product, also sometimes purchasing feedback from customers or non-customers as a reward of a small fee, which is getting questionable about the quality and the trustworthiness of the information.

*Podcast:* Podcast represents to the debate or discussion regarding an issue which is broadcasted in audio format. Podcasts are growing content marketing strategy which is used for user engagement (Hubspot, n.d.). To educate and create better interaction with customers, eCommerce websites are using not only visual information but also verbal information to share product information (Lin et al., 2012). Based on the research of Hubspot (n.d.), monthly listeners of the podcast media are growing, and the budgets for podcasts are also growing. Some companies have their podcast channel such as eBay to engage customers regarding several discussions.

### 3.3.2 Content distribution

For the distribution of several types of digital contents, digital marketers should choose the right distribution channel so that the right content can be distributed to the right audience.

*Blog:* Blog is one of the best platforms to share articles, how to guides, product reviews either in text or video form. Most of the blog contents are produced by private bloggers. As a creator of UGC, the opinion of a blogger is informal, non-commercial and the interaction frequently happens between the blogger and the audience (Ling et al., 2010). That is why customers consider blogs as one of the best sources for gathering information regarding a product or service (Ling et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2012). So, to get better customers engagement, business organizations are focusing on blogs to share

customers value-based and product-related contents, even nowadays companies are hiring contents writer to share high-quality contents that brings more sales leads form customers (Lin et al., 2012). However, Barger et al. (2016) think that it would be better if anyone from the business side works on writing contents because in that case, it would be easier to understand real customer needs and produce right contents to fulfill the need.

A blog, either developed personally or from a business organization, concentrates on maintaining the smooth flow of information (Lin et al., 2012). Ling et al. (2010) found that consumers seek bloggers recommendation before purchasing a new or expensive product. However, the reputation of the blogger is also a concerning issue. Because, consumers prefer recommendations from high-reputed bloggers as trustworthy than low-reputed blogger (Ling et al., 2010). Bloggers activity to share eWOM can affect a brand significantly either positively or negatively in a short time. That is why Lin et al. (2012) suggested that digital marketers should maintain a better relationship with bloggers to create a better information flow.

*Social Media:* Social media is a newly emerged platform for the interaction between customers and business organizations (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Khobzi, Lau & Cheung, 2019). According to Beets (2018), 69% of the content marketers mostly use the social media for the distribution of the digital contents where Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram are the most used social media platform.

In the social media both the company and consumers share contents in the form of text, images, videos and sometimes through live stream in the social media platform (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Besides this, leaving a reply on the comment of the user in social media platform, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and so on, brings the opportunity of interaction with the marketer to customer or customer to customer (Khobzi et al., 2019). Khobzi et al. (2019) found that either more positive or more negative comment on social media engage customers more. In case if there is a negative comment, Khobzi et al. (2019) suggested digital marketers to conduct a meaningful conversation to clarify the situation which will bring positive brand image among customers. So, easily marketers get engaged with customers and customers also

get the fan with the official network of the desired brand (Erkan & Evans, 2016). However, Barger et al. (2016) think that the level of engagement depends on the content type, the purpose of the shared content and above all, the chosen platform to distribute the content.

According to Khobzi et al. (2019), either follower or non-follower of the brand, any random user can interact with the content shared on the social media channel of the business. However, Jayasingh et al. (2018) found that brand-related content in the company social media channel gets more engagement. Lee, Hosanagar & Nair (2014) found that persuasive contents (such as related to customer value) in the social media is to key to engaging more customers rather than informative contents related to price, availability of the product and product features.

YouTube is the most trending and engaging platform to share videos (Smith, 2012; Barger et al., 2016). According to Barger et al. (2016), YouTube videos have more educational aspects. Though YouTube is not the only platform for video distribution, but the massive engagement of the users on YouTube videos indicates the reachability of the consumers through internet video platform (Simon, 2016). According to Smith, Fischer & Yongjian (2012), the most positive side of the YouTube platform is self-promotion of brand-related UGC. However, Weinstein (2019) found that more than 90% of worldwide customers purchased products after discovering on YouTube. Besides this, Google (n.d.-b) also found that 50% of the customers purchased electronic products through discovering on YouTube.

In Facebook, both the brand and the customer play the role of content co-creator where both parties interact through commenting or sharing or even creating new contents for the desired brand (Barger et al., 2016). According to Barger et al. (2016), contents with images in Facebook gets more attraction of consumers who used to like, comment and share the content from their profile. Khobzi et al. (2019) found that richness of the content, adding external links on the post, adding visual items in the post and the publishing time of the content plays the role on the level of engagement. In Facebook, users can review the business page, discuss related products, share opinion and experience through text or videos. Whereas, digital marketers respond to the

discussion either positive or negative, share product-related information, share links of valuable contents that go with the product of the company and promotional videos either product related or to bring emotional attachment among audiences. Gottbrecht (2017) suggested digital marketers not only to produce contents but also to encourage existing customers to share UGCs in the Facebook platform.

Based on the study of Barger et al. (2016), Twitter gets less engagement than YouTube and Facebook, because of the push strategy of the business brand. This statement goes with Smith et al. (2012). According to Smith et al. (2012), the most use of Twitter is for the discussion and spreading news. However, the UGC sharing policy of Starbucks (designing #whitecupcontest) got more engagement as that was pull as well as inbound marketing strategy.

According to Norris (n.d.), Instagram was basically used as a platform of sharing images and short videos to the target audience. But, the recent feature of IGTV changed the concept where it allows users to post longer videos. Based on the research of Norris (n.d.), IGTV is going to be the best competitor of sharing video.

Besides this, Pinterest is used mostly for sharing infographics as well as images. Similarly, Flickr is also used as an image sharing platform.

Along with video publishing method, nowadays, live video streaming (on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) has brought revolutionary changes where both users and digital marketers can interact with customers directly. Furthermore, adding stories into different social media platform also changed the activity of sharing contents with prospect customers.

Nowadays, most of the marketers are using paid methods to distribute their contents only to attract new audiences (Beets, 2018). Moreover, social media, especially Facebook, is mostly used platform for the distribution of paid contents (Beets, 2018).

*Third-party Website:* Third party website helps to reach audiences as well as bring leads. According to The Nielsen Company (2018-b), there are several websites, such

as BuzzFeed, Group Nine Media, Mic, Refinery29, Vix and so on, who are targeting mostly the Millennials and offering contents from several publishers' blog post, video content, review analysis, news and much more. These types of platform are creating an opportunity to meet the content creator and the audience. Ultimately through these media, digital marketers and customers are sharing contents to make the engagement.

Addition of customers review on the product page is an evolutionary concept. Because, online reviews create a positive impression to customers which helps online shoppers to visit websites often (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). But, Mudambi & Schuff (2010) found that several online marketplaces are purchasing online reviews to take competitive advantages compared to other online shopping websites. As a result, prospect customers are getting confused to find honest and quality customer reviews. To overcome this situation, websites like Amazon and other website introduced "helpful" vote, where one person can easily validate another customer's review quality by voting. As a result, consumers can sort product reviews based on the helpfulness level from the product information page and make the purchasing decision (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). That is why, to make the customer reviews most helpful to prospect customers, Mudambi & Schuff (2010) suggested that customers can be encouraged to provide both pros and cons of the product which will maintain the quality of the customer review. However, Mudambi & Schuff (2010) found that the retailers are showing most helpful and top-rated reviews in the first page so that customers can be easily get convinced to choose the product for the final purchase decision.

Furthermore, some websites are using third-party platforms to take customer reviews easily and also showcase those review to the customer. Such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google are mostly used platforms for this purpose.

*Influencers:* Influencers are another source of content creation and distribution channel for the business organization. Influencers are highly personalized personnel in the social media who have their channels to create and engage customers based on customers need. In a study, Gottbrecht (2017) found that the average engagement on influencers content was around three times higher compared to others. That means influencers can create better engagement into their networks to share contents with

audiences. However, several grown-up platforms (such as Neoreach, Famebit, HYPR, lefty and so on) are working to connect most popular influencers with related brands worldwide to produce on demand contents. The primary difference between influencers generated content and UGC is that influencers are highly professional to deliver contents over the video and work with the needs of customers, where UGCs are produced only to be involved with the social activities from interest or to get some benefit from several platforms. So, digital marketers can hire influencers to produce contents to get more customers engagement which will ultimately bring more leads for the business organization.

### **3.4 Content strategies to gain customers trust**

The term "trust" can be defined as a mindset, where one person is ready to accept another person's recommendation regarding a product or service for the expectation of positive result without searching any distinct alternatives (Azam, 2015). More precisely, trustworthiness is an element of credibility where a reader or prospect customer expects to get honest, non-commercial and non-biased information based on the experience regarding a product or service (Filieri, 2016). However, according to Filieri (2016), credibility refers to the expertise level, reputation, involvement with the community, and information quality of the source person who is sharing those contents.

Digital contents shared by customers as well as by the digital marketers are considered as eWOM. eWOM shared over the digital platform by existing or potential customers can either be positive or negative (Lin et al., 2012). Smith (2012) found that eWOM is considered twelve times more authentic than the information provided by the company or the manufacturer. According to Lin et al. (2012), eWOM is anonymous compared to the traditional face-to-face WOM which is widespread and issues regarding credibility and sources is questioned to understand the quality of the message. So, to maintain the trustworthiness regarding produced and distributed digital contents, there should have some criteria that motivate customers to accept those contents as trustworthy and authentic.

Based on the study, Filieri (2016) found that consumers trustworthiness can be assessed into four categories – content presentation style, the extremity of the message, the source of information, and pattern of the contents.

*Writing style/ content presentation* – According to Filieri (2016), customers do not trust the content which is shorter without detailed information. Besides this, If the content is not relevant to the product or service also fails to get customers trust. However, Filieri (2016) suggested that the content creator should provide the evidence of purchase to share the product reviews either video or in the text format including images. Furthermore, both Filieri (2016) and Noguti (2016) suggested that the presentation of the content should be personal so that audience gets emotional attachments of personalization; otherwise, it will represent only the marketing of the product and will fail to gain customers trust.

*The extremity of the message:* According to Filieri (2016), The content regarding a product or service should not be extremely positive or negative rather than the combination of both positive and negative. Because Filieri (2016) clarified that combination of both positive and negative content makes it trustworthy otherwise it represents one-sided bias content and lose the acceptance among customers. This statement of Filieri (2016) goes perfectly with Mudambi & Schuff, (2010).

*The reviewer information:* The source of the content is also an important issue. Because Filieri (2016) mentioned that, the profile of the reviewer should be visible to the customer to make the content authentic and reliable based on the expertise level. Such as reviewer profile picture, registration date, information linked to the social profile, number of reviews provided in the platform and above all, proof of purchase with the picture is vital for the trustworthiness and reliability on the reviewer. So, the anonymous user without proper information or new reviewer gets less reliability and trustworthiness among customers.

*Patterns of the content:* According to Filieri (2016) customers are more engaged with the product which is sold more, and there are more reviews on the product. But, Filieri (2016) mentioned that duplicate or very close to duplicate reviews are considered as



fake review which frustrates customers from the point of authenticity. That is why the website admin should focus on preventing fake or promotional reviewers to keep the reputation of the platform. Because Mudambi & Schuff (2010) found that websites, such as Amazon, are providing guidelines whenever customers intend to share their experiences which helps to maintain the quality of reviews. However, Filieri (2016) suggested that the product owner should monitor into several platform to respond and engage with customers whether it is a positive or negative review so that customers can trust the caring of the business to the customer.

Nowadays to attract and gain trust among customers, companies are trying to encourage users to produce more contents by offering coupons, gifts and even payments as reward (Smith, 2012). For example, Redbull is sharing UGC in the company Instagram Post to get more customers engagement which is not only influencing customers on trust and belief but also saving the content production cost for the company.

Kim & Song (2010) mentioned that the more engagement of eWOM, the more reliable it is. People get engaged with the eWOM through commenting, debating and even sharing similar opinions which make the information related to the product more trustworthy (Kim & Song, 2010). Besides this, the helpfulness votes on review, likes on a Facebook post or even upvotes in Reddit contents also affect on the trustworthiness of the customers (Filieri, 2016)

### **3.5 Effective digital content marketing and customers' online purchasing decision**

As a determinant of building trust among customers, the WOM should be reliable whether it is shared from the company or the consumers or even by the influencers so that it gets trustworthiness on the shared content (Kim & Song, 2010). Ling et al. (2010) found that trust has a direct influence on online purchasing intention.

According to Kim & Song (2010), The level of loyalty, trustworthiness and purchasing behavior varies based on the quality of the contents. That is why Erkan & Evans (2016)

stated that the quality and credibility of the information plays an excellent role for customers decision making in the online platform.

People interact through blogs, forums, social media networks, and review websites to share opinion and exchange information with others (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). Kim & Song (2010) found that consumers verify the quality of the contents by comparing through various sources from a different perspective which helps them to take final purchasing decision.

Hsu, Chuan-Chuan Lin & Chiang (2013) found that blogging is one of the most popular channels to share personal opinions, experience and feelings about a product or service which plays a significant role on consumers online purchasing decision.

As the online transaction is performed in the virtual world without face to face interaction, the recommendation of users works as a powerful tool to reach and motivate customers for the final purchasing decision making (Hsu et al., 2013). According to Smith (2012), the best motivator of writing the online review is the satisfaction level from the product and compensation policy as after-sales service. In a study by Cheung & Thadani (2012), 91% of the consumer read online reviews and UGCs into different platform before making a purchasing decision of a product or service. Besides this Erkan & Evans (2016) found that social media became one of the growing platforms for sharing experience and opinion with customers regarding product or service which directly or indirectly affects on consumers purchasing decision.

For sharing videos, YouTube is the most engaging platform that can reach customers by its self-promotion features (Smith, 2012; Barger et al., 2016). Besides this, the recent improvement of IGTV features changed the concept of sharing videos as well as live videos.

Since the last few years, e-retailers started to apply live video streaming policy to engage and attract more customers through real-time interaction of Business to Business, Business to Customers or even Customers to Customers and sharing

authentic information of the product (such as color, size, ingredients and other features) through practical way which is increasing day by day. (Zhang, Qin, Wang & Luo, 2019). However, Zhang et al. (2019) found that live video streaming has a positive influence on customers online purchase decision.

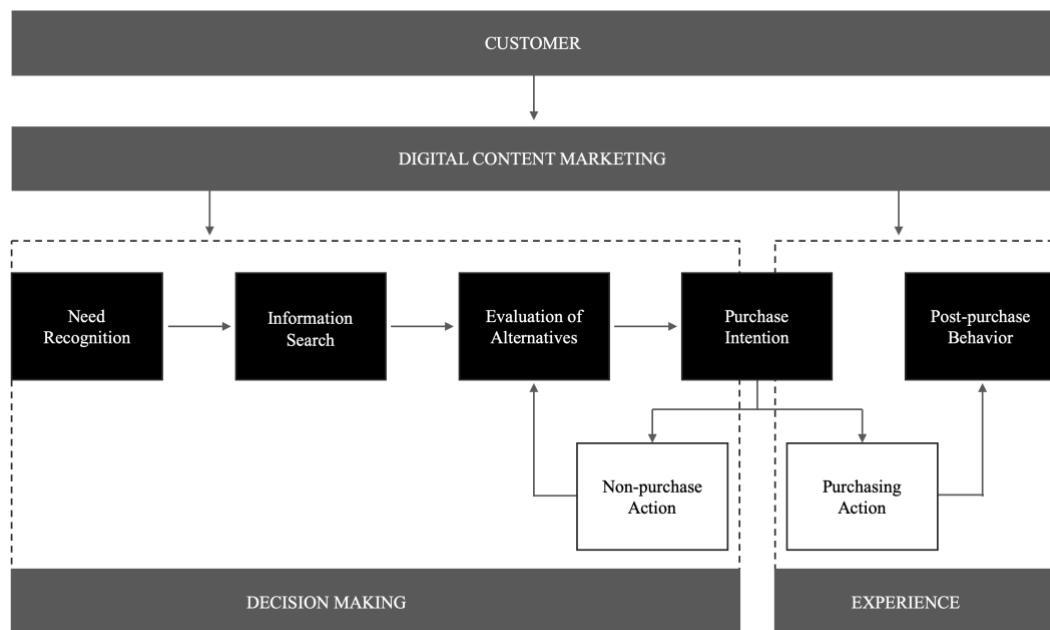
One of the recent digital content marketing strategy widely applied by digital marketers into social media platforms is story sharing. Story sharing can be either text, image or video form. Based on the study of Pera & Viglia (2016), video storytelling can bring much more emotional attachment among customers compared to text-based storytelling which helps to build a long-term relationship. The same source suggested to digital marketers that, sharing customers story in the video form will build a better relationship with customers. For example, Airbnb is using this strategy which is gaining the benefit of customers engagement.

Along with the technological development, the number of customers is growing in the e-commerce platform. The motivation factors behind accepting of the e-commerce platforms are – usability of the website navigation, personalized service of the website, safer environment for the transaction, accessibility to the information and so on (Close, & Kukar-Kinney, 2010; Zhang et al., 2019).

The online environment is all about visual experience for a customer to interact with the website. Im, Lennon & Stoel (2010) suggested that the website should be readable, product images should be in high-resolution for creating engagement with the customers. Because visually appealing website creates more interest of the customers which increases the purchasing intention through creating positive impact (Im, Lennon & Stoel, 2010; Lin et al., 2012), for example – unboxing videos of the product. The researchers suggested digital marketers to concentrate on the utilization of website layout, product visualization, color utilization, which communicates better with customers as well as consumers (Lin et al., 2012). Because, highly visual information can create positive impact than low-quality visual information (Im, Lennon & Stoel, 2010). However, according to Smith (2012), simple, interactive, personalized and bright color websites can attract more audience. Furthermore, product quality,

competitive price, return policy, gift, discount coupon, and better shipping rate influence a customer to re-visit a website (Smith, 2012; Zhang et al., 2019).

Figure 3 represents the theoretical framework to understand the impact of DCM on consumers online purchasing behavior from the context of B2C. The theoretical framework of the online purchasing process is developed based on the traditional purchasing process model of Kotler (figure 2). To develop the theoretical framework on DCM findings of the prior researches were studied since the aim of this research to understand the effect of b2c DCM.



**Figure 3. Impact of digital content marketing on consumers online purchasing process**

## **4 METHOD FOR RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter will explain the method used for this research, the method of data collection, criteria for the selection of target group and finally the method of data analysis so that the key findings can be identified.

### **4.1 Qualitative research method**

The research method chosen for this study is qualitative. Because it helps to understand the phenomenon through in-depth and meaningful analysis (Filieri, 2016; Richard, 2013). Besides this, qualitative research helps to understand what is going on (Black, 1994). According to Richard (2013), the information gained through qualitative research is richer, informative and offer enhanced understanding compared to quantitative research.

According to Rodríguez-Ardura et al. (2012), applying qualitative research method is consumer-centric rather than a research agenda which helps to understand deeply what the motivating factors are and how consumers interact to purchase from the online marketplace. However, Black (1994) also mentioned that qualitative research analyzes the holistic approach to understand the complexities regarding the behavior of people. As qualitative research is beneficial for the deep understanding of the research subjects, so it will help to get familiarized on how target customers feel, what they think and how they behave on digital contents and online purchasing.

There are several techniques for data collection in qualitative research methodology, such as Observation, Interview, focus group, case study and so on. According to Bryman & Bell (2007), for the data collection, the most commonly used method in qualitative research is the interview. Saunders et al. (2016:388) also mentioned that conducting an interview is useful to gather reliable data regarding the research area. So, this research data will be collected through conducting semi-structured interview where the interviewer will discuss with the interviewee individuals to get an in-depth understanding about online purchasing where DCM will play the impact for the final purchasing decision.

## 4.2 Implementation of the research

The empirical research will be implemented by selecting the right target group and conducting semi-structured interview among the target groups. The strategy for selecting the target group and conducting the semi-structured interview is discussed here.

### 4.2.1 Target group

To narrow down the respondents for the data collection it is essential to define the target group for this study. It is challenging to collect information from a wide range of respondents as there are issues regarding time and cost for the study (Saunders et al., 2016:274). Again, the quality of data is also a matter where taking data from mass people will not help to maintain reliable data.

This study will focus on understanding the impact of several types of digital contents on customers online purchasing decision. So, it is important to select those target group of people who are familiar with digital contents and who usually buy from the online marketplace. To make it even narrower, this study will focus on those customers who do the transaction in the eCommerce platform more or less but most of the time bought electronic products. Because according to The Nielsen Company (2018-a), Consumer electronic is one of the top growing categories in the eCommerce platform.

According to Smith (2012) and Dhanapal et al. (2015), *Generation Y (also known as Millennials)*, born between the 1980s and 1994s, are the most active users into digital platforms for shopping where almost half of the total spending in online shopping comes from this generation. Besides this, Statista (n.d.) also found that customers of 25 to 34 age group were the most electronic product purchaser worldwide through online platforms in 2017.

Smith (2012) and Dhanapal et al. (2015) found that Generation Y is more active in content production and distribution through blog and other video sharing platform to share the opinion, feedback based on the consumption and promote the best one.

Because, generation Y has more emotional involvements with online purchasing who tends to give more time for searching, research and purchase heavily on different promotional sales deal (Dhanapal et al., 2015). That is why, because of their such involvement the reachability to this generation is easier for a digital marketer through digital platforms.

So, this research will target the age group of 25 to 34 to collect data who are engaged with online purchasing platform especially to purchase electronic products and who are more or less familiar with digital contents for their purchasing and other purposes. The respondents were chosen through the convenience sampling method where the age, engagement with online purchasing and familiarity with digital contents were considered. According to Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2016), applying convenience sampling ensures easier reaching to the target group because of the geographical location, availability, and willingness of the respondents so that data collection can be faster. Table 1 indicates the information about the interviewees which is provided below.

**Table 1: Information about the interviewees**

Interviewee	Sex	Age	Occupation	Interview Location	Interview date	Duration (min)
A	Male	25	Student	University	14.3.2019	19:53
B	Male	32	Student	University	14.3.2019	26:10
C	Female	25	Student	University	15.3.2019	21:30
D	Male	28	Student	University	15.3.2019	14:53
E	Male	25	Student	University	15.3.2019	17:53
F	Male	25	Student	Private Apartment	16.3.2019	19:58
G	Male	25	Student	Private Apartment	16.3.2019	14:03

H	Male	30	Student	Private Apartment	17.3.2019	36:35
I	Male	29	Software Engineer	Messenger	18.3.2019	27:36
J	Male	26	Student	Messenger	18.3.2019	31:40
K	Male	28	Student	Private Apartment	18.3.2019	20:46

#### 4.2.2 Semi-structure interview

Interview in the qualitative method provides respondents perception and feeling into in-depth manner to get real insight (Filieri, 2016). According to Saunders et al. (2016:388), Semi-structured interview is essential to get an exploratory and in-depth understanding of a research area such as, to understand the attitude and behavior, opinion or decision, reason behind the decision and so on. So, to gain a deeper understanding the researcher has some key questions based on the theme of the research areas where the question pattern varies from person to person (Saunders et al., 2016:391). The question pattern is open-ended so that the discussion can go more profound as it is needed to get the required data for research (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). So, to conduct this study, few questions were determined earlier where question pattern was different from each respondent because of their nature and even some extra question were also asked to get the clear idea about the research areas.

All of those interviews were conducted in English. The session of the interview was recorded in audio format. Because, recording of the interview helps to concentrate more during the discussion with the respondents which may not be possible when the note is taken during the interview (Saunders et al., 2016:391; Gill et al., 2008). Nine interviews were taken face to face and the rest two interviews were taken over Facebook messenger. The location was selected carefully to avoid the distraction during the interview session. Finally, all of the interviews were transcribed carefully so that reliable data can be gathered.



According to Gill et al. (2008), the duration of the interview differs from person to person, researcher, and the discussed areas. So, for this study, the concentration was on the required information based on several areas rather than the length of the interview. Discussions were conducted until the respondents were able to provide clear ideas and the proper explanation. That is why the length of the interviews varied from person to person which were around 14 minutes to 37 minutes.

### **4.3 Data analysis**

As the primary objective of this study is to understand how digital contents impact on consumers online purchasing behavior which goes to understand the phenomenon and what are the key factors behind that phenomenon. So, this study will use abductive reasoning for empirical analysis. Because, abductive reasoning is helpful to develop a new theory or extend an existing theory regarding a study area and later on test it through the data collection (Saunders et al., 2016:145). Saunders et al. (2016:168) also found that for the qualitative study researchers prefer to select abductive reasoning to develop a new theory where inductive approach focus on already developed theory and deductive approach focus on the testing of previous theories.

All the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed in the word document before the analysis. The data from the respondents are mainly transcribed in the word document word-by-word as it is in the audio recorded file. After transcription, essential data was categorized under the main theme so that it helps to reach the findings of the study.

This study is categorized into three main themes which will help to show the overall analysis in a structured way. The main themes for this study are – Attitudes towards digital contents, attitudes towards online purchasing, and the role of digital contents on customers online purchasing process.

## 5 ANALYSIS OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

In this chapter collected data through the semi-structured interview will be analyzed. The method of data analysis is discussed in the previous chapter. After analyzing empirical data, the theoretical framework will be updated with key findings. At the latter part of this chapter result of the analysis will be shown which will ultimately take to the findings of this study.

### 5.1 Attitude towards digital contents

Digital content is a broad area where the availability of the content is overwhelming the digital platform. The data shows that respondents are concerned about the concept of digital content and several types of digital contents (such as- videos, blog texts, articles, customers review, images, infographics, animated GIFs, podcasts, presentations, and pdf eBooks), which are created and distributed either from the company side or the customer side or even dedicated blogger side in the online platform by using several media like websites, personal blogs, forums, social media platform and so on. That means they are familiar with all of these contents previously and are habituated to interact with these contents for several purposes.

*“It’s [digital content] basically the things that are being portrayed on social medias and other channels to attract consumers and drive consumers toward a product or service.”* Person D

*“Basically, I think digital contents are any contents or any information that you can find digitally online. For example, let’s say, videos, articles, blogs, reviews etc. All of these contents that give you some information about something.”*  
Person H

*“(....) they [digital content] can be anything like videos or maybe any news elements or any blog contents or anything which can be stored digitally or can be viewed with digital devices for example, mobile, computer or laptop or anything like that.”* Person I

Digital contents are useful for several purposes such as getting some trendy news, innovation, learning the functionalities of products, the ins and outs of a product or service, doing the market research for searching the right product and so on. The data analysis indicates that most of the respondents are engaged with several types of digital contents mostly to track the trends of the technology and also to make purchasing decision regarding a product or service.

*“So, the shift of this technology is very interesting to me and I always try to keep up to date myself about those. So, it’s all about learning as well as purchasing purpose.”* Person B

*“It’s not for learning purpose only. It’s basically for my own benefit, for example if I want to buy some product such as electronic or other types of product, then I usually like to watch videos and other types of contents as well more than usual. Yes, sometimes I like to watch even I am not intending to buy any product.”*  
Person C

Digital contents are offered into several areas related to product or service, trendy news, new gadgets in the market, innovation and so on. Because of the widespreadness of digital contents, audiences get engaged with contents which are sometimes intentional and sometimes unintentional. Based on the conducted interview session, it is found that most of the interviewee get engaged with digital contents unintentionally or any specific purpose for a short period, where only two interviewees (Person A, G, and J) gives specific time every day to read or watch those digital contents in their interested areas. The rest of the interviewees does not have any specific time for having digital contents.

*“It’s more unstructured whenever I am browsing and scrolling and then I read. No specific time for that.”* Person F

*“I watch videos regularly to learn something new and even sometimes for purchasing purpose. I waste lots of time by watching digital contents around 3 hours per day.”* Person A

The theoretical part of this study showed that video attracts customers more than any other contents. Moreover, interviewees are engaged with several kinds of contents which depends on their purpose. It is found from the data analysis that most of the respondents prefer video contents more than any other contents. However, two interviewees (Person F and J) prefer to read more than watching video contents.

*“Videos attract me more. Because I know the specification of the product. At the same time, I can see the visual contribution also.”* Person D

*“I read blogs more than any other contents on my favorite areas. You can post for example in medium.”* Person F

*“(.) first priority goes to videos. Now after that I will go for the user feedback, blogs and everything else.”* Person H

There are some essential elements of digital content whether it is text or video or any other content. Such as heading, the theme of the topic, description, contents connecting technique through storytelling, thumb of the content, related images, content presentation language, animated gifs to present in a funny way, content length or duration and so on. Even these elements help the content creator to produce and present contents in a structured way so that customers engagement can be attained. Based on the collected data, respondents focused on the title, thumb image, content writing and presentation, use of graphics to make the content more exciting and so on.

*“(....) If it’s a blog post writing the main focus should be on writing and I think they should use some relevant images. (....) they should tell some story to the content.”* Person F

*“The title gets more attention to me most of the time. (....). In blog text if they produce the review on a numerical style, I mean point by point or numbering. Because it’s straight forward for the review and they can show the words they are talking about.”* Person G

*“(....) for the videos, the main thing is highlighting the main theme of the topics though it depends of course (....).”* Person I

*“I think it could be the title of the video, yeah title must be attractive to me that that will influence me to watch the video first and the Thumbnail image before I play the video as well. And the video is supposed to have good comparison with the product’s good sides and bad sides.”* Person K

Only the creation of digital contents in a structured way does not ensure customers engagement at all. It is also a matter of distribution in the proper channel so that it can reach the target audience. The finding of the data shows that most of the respondents depend on the social media platform to get desired contents regarding the product or service or any other area. Besides this, personal blogs, some forums and content sharing website also play the role to attract the target audience. Because along with social media platform respondents informed that there is some specific platform to search and find the desired content. So, the reputation of the platform and the quality is an issue here to get into the bookmark list of audiences. Even some respondents do not prefer any specific platform to get the desired content. They use the Google search engine and then pick the first few websites to visit.

*“No, actually there is no specific platform for me. But the thing is that while watching YouTube videos lot of content comes or when surfing Facebook lots of contents come automatically (....).”* Person C

*“Usually for the stuff I read, like bit serious stuff, I find most of them from twitter. Other than I particularly follow some blogs and websites. From twitter I would say the most favorite blog I follow, for technology, is TechCrunch, the verge, I also follow the publications of HBR Harvard to get in depth ideas.”* Person F

*“(....) I think Facebook is a good way of getting the content even the YouTube as well so I can say with those two even said some time a yet to service for getting some great information over Google.”* Person K

There are some criteria for customers to select the best content for them. It is all about the content quality that attracts the target audience. Even Google and other search engine rank those contents which are mostly visited by users, quality is maintained, the uniqueness of the content is applied and some other criteria. The collected data indicates that respondents select the right content based on the number of shares, number of views, the source of the content, the reputation of the content creator, number of subscribers of the channel and above all the comment of other viewers on specific content. However, some respondents judge the quality and reliability of the content by evaluating few sources and then based on those multisource contents they make their judgments.

*“I made an average assumption to justify the best one for me. It’s not depending on what company is saying and reviewer also saying. But my own perception matters to me where the content fits me based on my demand and requirements.”*

Person C

*“It’s a matter how many times a video was shared online even in my newsfeed and how many views on the videos, how many subscriptions on the channel, the comments about the video such as how many people are contributing on the video.”* Person D

*“I think for me it's usually a lot about the writer that whatever he or she is writing. If the writer has experienced that like if he has any insight on that particular topic. and I think quite often that's reflected on the blog or articles that you can understand ok this guy knows what he is talking about.”* Person F

*“I think I follow who actually posted these like who is that authentic source or not, how they write about the content, is it well organized or not and the clarity and actually there are many things to need to consider when I get or when I read or when I watch something.”* Person K

Target audience gets engaged with the digital content whenever it gives the feeling of trust and authenticity. So, the content producer should produce content in such a way,

so that it feels trustworthy without any doubt. Most of the respondents indicated the acceptability of contents from customers rather than the company channel. However, some respondents (Person B and D) are opposite of that criteria, that means they prioritize company content more than bloggers content. Besides this, for UGC the popularity and profile of the content producer is a matter to some interviewees (Person F) to mark that as authentic information without any confusion. Person C is different from other interviewees, which neither company nor reviewer, the respondent mostly trust in customer review or comment section. However, the presentation of the content sometimes provides the answer of authenticity to the audience. Finally, most of the interviewees suggested to check the comment section to understand the authenticity and trustworthiness of the content.

Trustworthiness of the content can be determined from the source or creator of the content; respondents mentioned that,

*“Digital contents provided by bloggers matter a lot, because company it’s a business and they always want to sell their product. (....). I don’t trust company contents much than bloggers contents available in other online platforms.”*

Person A

*“I check the discussion or comment section of the video also customer engagement is available there. As I mentioned earlier, I do not believe companies and also reviewers. May be the reviewer can be someone on behalf of the company. So, I always check the discussion section of the content whatever comes from the customer side into reviewed contents and also even blog contents. The comment section builds trust on me.”* Person C

*“I think one probably factor is that if the writer or the producer of the content is traceable so that to google the name of the writer that it should give you some authentic results. (....). And another thing I could add is that I think it's it again comes usually comes from reputation.”* Person F

However, customer review or feedback is another kind of digital content which is widely evaluated as an authentic source of information for any product or service, because those are coming from the customers who already purchased or consumed the product and posted the feedback over there. But, interviewees found some unethical practice which is nowadays, eCommerce platforms are purchasing customer reviews from random people to show it more trustworthy. However, there are some psychological issues among the interviewees that can justify the genuine and fake customer reviews so that customers can easily be aware of the reliability of the feedback.

*“I have some personal tricks. If a customer is giving honest review, there would be both positive and negative sides. (...) Because any product can't have only positive side to its customer of course it will have both positive and negative sides.”* Person C

*“When someone posts the picture of the product with the review, then I take it authentic. It shows the proof of the purchase.”* Person D

However, Person F stated an important aspect about the authenticity of the content.

*“(....) my biggest worry about digital content is that I think still a lot of them are false and it's probably because I could identify the real ones from fake. (...) So, it should be easier to trace the scam to just identify, ok so this is scam, and this is not. So, the digital content producers should try to probably come up with a mechanism that that will help them to distinguish from the fake content producers (....).”* Person F

## **5.2 Attitude towards online purchasing**

Previous researchers and this study's theoretical analysis showed that the tendency of purchasing from the online marketplace is growing day by day. Though there are some positive and negative sides of doing transactions in the eCommerce platform, customers are accepting new technology day by day. Collected data from the interview



indicates that most of them (Person B, C, E, H, I, J and K) are purchasing most of the time, and few of them (Person D, F, and G) do the transaction sometimes. However, the interviewee Person A is different from others, because the respondent explained that geographical location is also a fact for getting habituated with the technology and doing transactions in the eCommerce platform. But, after moving to Finland, the respondent started doing transactions in the eCommerce platform, which is a rapid change of habit.

*“I just recently started buying online but before because I came from Egypt and it’s not popular there.”* Person A

*“Yes, I do. Many different things. at least once per month. (...). I mostly buy as I said tech products sometimes I also buy some other products which are not available in the stores here in Finland especially in Oulu (...).”* Person J

There are some reasons behind the growing purchasing habit among respondents, which is the accessibility of the information about products, time-saving, lower price and above all, availability of the product.

*“Basically, anything I buy from online it's easy access. (...) That's the main thing I buy it all. It's quite convenient for you to place an order. They will simply come to my own door without going outside.”* Person H

*“It's usually much less expensive than if I buy it in the stores especially if I'm buying some tech stuff. (...) it's usually about the price and it's very convenient because you can also get your product delivered to your home.”* Person J

Though internet purchasing made the life more accessible, almost all the respondents think that still there are some threats available, especially for doing transactions outside of Finland as well as EU and even some of them already faced similar kind of situation before. Those are related to the product quality, product measurement, misrepresentation of the product picture and product information and so on. However,

the interviewee F does not think there is still that much significant threat over the eCommerce platform in this modern age.

*“I think its 2019 and we have all the technologies that could make the websites more secure. So, I think all the websites are pretty much safe.”* Person F

*“(....) sometimes it can happen that you actually don't get the whole amount back or you can get a product you didn't order or they didn't deliver in the right color or it's just kind of technical difficulties and it can be really difficult to return it then because if it takes longer and it's harder to prove.”* Person J

This study is focusing on electronic products where the respondents are purchasing products from online. Most of them purchased from Finnish eCommerce platforms. Except, respondents D, F, J and K purchased outside of Finland which is China, Norway, and Germany respectively. So, the reputation of the platform, trust, product quality, aftersales service and price of the product were the main reasons for doing the purchasing action from those platforms. Here is the list of electronic products all the respondents purchased.

**Table 2: Recent electronic product purchase**

Interviewee	Recent Electronic Product
Person A	Huawei mobile
Person B	MacBook
Person C	Samsung phone
Person D	Headphone
Person E	MacBook Air
Person F	Jabra earbud
Person G	PS4
Person H	Jaybird wireless headphone
Person I	Huawei Phone

Person J	Asus ROG laptop
Person K	Headphone

Even in some cases if the product was not available in the storage of the market, then there was the facility to book from online and then collect from the store or home delivery after the arrival of the product. Person H and I experienced the same situation.

*“(....) I bought a wireless Bluetooth headphone from Gigantti from web platform. (....) I booked it from the web platform, and I picked up from the store. (....) Because the one that I ordered it's not available in Helsinki. They have to order from Sweden.”* Person H

### 5.3 Role of digital contents for online purchasing decision

Purchasing process shows the total journey of a customer to make a purchase decision and to take action accordingly. Research showed that online and offline online purchasing follows Kotler's five-stage of the purchasing process. In this study, the theoretical framework is prepared based on that purchasing process model also. This discussion is going to show the impact of digital contents on the online purchasing process of customers. Based on the discussion and data analysis it is found that purchasing process is following the model whenever customers are going to purchase a new product which can be either from the previously experienced brand or from a newly introduced brand. However, whenever a customer is going to purchase the same product, in that case, few steps are skipped, and final purchasing is done based on the need. So, in this case, the purchasing process is assumed the same, because the customer followed the same process in the research phase when the product was new. The collected data will show the research

*Need Recognition:* Need can be recognized for several reasons. Need can be raised because of the problem customers face, but even need can be raised because of the surrounding friends or family members usage of any product or service or because of the promotional offer during any special occasion or event or even because of the

marketing campaign company is taking to attract customers. The collected data shows that need of the respondents raised because of the special occasion, to improve the consumption into expensive products, to solve the problem of daily activities, and the news section of any content related blog or website.

Digital content helps to push something in customers' mind, so that customers can be aware of that product. In this case customers might be familiar with the existing brands, or sometimes digital contents help customers to find the product based on their needs.

*"(....) in black Friday I was just got hitted by online sponsored ads of the company in Facebook and Instagram."* Person A

*"I was quite happy with the product that I have been using the same but because of these real-life activities it broke and then I thought a need of buying it because I'm really used to listening to music while going around."* Person H

*Information Search:* When customers feel their needs for something, then it has come to the information search stage. In this stage, if customers are not sure about the available brand for their consumptions, they search randomly over the internet for the product based on their needs and sort-out some key products in the list based on the brand, features, prices and the design of the product. So, most of the customer depends on the search engine and some related websites and blogs to know more trendy information. However, if customers are determined to purchase the product from a specific brand than the sources of information come basically from the company and also related websites to offer some tips and tricks for the selection of specific product. Collected data indicates that some respondents were sure about the targeted brand, some of them were not sure about the brand and even some respondents kept multiple brands in their choice to find out relevant products based on their budget but from targeted brands. Furthermore, to find out all the information, respondents were dependent mostly on several websites and blogs rather than company websites only. But still, company websites played a role for interviewee person B and D to see the list of products based on their needs.

*“I searched about a mobile for example best mobile in 2018 and then also it may be the best mobile but so expensive. So, it leads me to the rank and possibilities to go through my budget.”* Person A

*“I was a fan of Huawei mobile. So, I was always ready to buy a new one from the Huawei. and I just realized two months ago, I need a new one. So, I was just looking for something within my budget. So, I was just exploring Elisa’s website and I was just going through the mobile phones.”* Person I

Digital contents not only provide information related to the product or service but also it helps to discover some new products from the new or existing brand. Whenever customers get familiar with some new products, then it creates interest among customers to know more about the product which directs customers to the information search stage.

*“(....) when I was visiting one of the websites, I saw an announcement that Jabra has announced a new wireless earbud which looks super cool. (....) So, and then I started digging more.”* Person F

*Evaluation of alternatives:* This stage starts when customers target some product based on the price range or quality or any other perspective so that it becomes easier to compare among selected products and take the final purchase decision in the later stage. Data shows that in this stage customers compare not only product quality, but also the price, delivery time, even the marketplace based on their convenience.

*“(....) I was now in my options between Huawei, Samsung and Nokia, then I found Samsung was expensive and excluded that phone from my list. Then it was time for research between Huawei and Nokia, and I had to make the decision for one of those cause both were almost same price and category. Then I went through some website to find out the technical specifications between both mobile and I went through Huawei because it was higher technical specifications with same price category.”* Person A

*“Then I started to compare one phone to another one. Initially I was intending to buy another phone actually. But when I started to watch review videos and other contents related to that mobile phone, I did not feel that much attractive anymore to that mobile. Then I skipped that one and then I shifted to the current mobile phone (....)”* Person C

In this stage, customers do not compare products based on the quality and feature only. However, when a customer already identified the targeted product and the customer is price-oriented, then the customer starts to compare among the retailers as well as eCommerce platforms. For some customers (especially for person G), the purchasing process starts in this stage, because the product is already known or predetermined.

*“I am a type of customer who is price oriented where I search about a cheapest offer and cheapest shipping price. So, I just compare the price online. (....) I went to the same product and it was having the same price for several sellers. And then I went to the sellers that have very good reviews who ship the product within 1 week (in short time) and the price is very cheap, I just select the seller to purchase.”* Person A

*“At first I was actually having the review of PS4 and Xbox One, and when I compared both of the product, I found that ps4 is better for me than Xbox One.”*  
Person G

*“And then I started searching for prices as well. (....) and then I started searching for comparing the prices and I was searching the prices in Finland also Gigantti for example and the prices in stores and then the prices in Amazon and eBay.”* Person J

Digital content plays a significant role to do the benchmark among products, and even sometimes it influences customers to change their mind regarding a purchasing decision.

*“I was intended to buy an iPhone and I watched a lot of videos to see the comparison between iPhone and other phones. Those videos were telling that iPhone is prestigious nothing else. I mean I have to pay a lot of money, but the quality is not very good than other alternatives that I will get at much lower price than iPhone. So, after watching those videos and after knowing those through contents from so many iPhone haters then I switched to lower budget Samsung A9 phone.”* Person C

*“I was determined to get the Jaybird Tarah Pro that was the new one from the same company that I use. I saw so many contents and they say okay Jabra Elite is really good. And the thing is it was kind of modern and it didn't have wire. I have never tried that one and I thought okay why not try it. Because of so many contents though I had a mindset of buying this one I switch it to that one.”*  
Person H

*Purchasing intention:* This stage is composed of two actions such as buying behavior and non-buying behavior. Because theoretical analysis shows that in this stage, a customer can either purchase the product as determined in the evaluation stage, at the same time because of some issue customers might leave the shopping cart as well and abort the purchasing action. Based on the collected data for this study, almost all of the respondents faced the same situation where they aborted the shopping cart and chose alternative eCommerce platform to find the right product for the right deal.

The analysis of data shows that purchasing behavior happens because of the product quality, need satisfaction, after sales service of the platform, price, delivery duration and availability of the product, and customers feedback regarding the product.

*“I decided to buy a Mac, and I searched for retailers in Finland, as I am living in Oulu, who are providing the product. I found DNA, Elisa and Telia. DNA was not supposed to give me the product with installment. I went to Elisa because of their customer service, even the warranty of the product is longer than Telia. so, I decided to buy from Elisa. And then I ordered it online.”* Person E

*“I decided to buy it from Amazon because I had the protection and the price was the lowest one for this computer the specific computer I chose. And I know that they also deliver quite fast and was much faster delivery than from the other websites.”* Person J

Customers usually read several information before making a purchase. The data shows that interviewees read about the product specifications, price, customers feedback, product reviews from several sources, shipment information and most important brand and the retailers.

*“before the product purchase I just go about sellers and see their view about the seller himself. If he just does the shipment online, if he is responsible or not. If he returns money if the product have something false or not. (...) So, first thing I care about online purchasing is the reputation of the seller.”* Person A

*“I usually read a lot of reviews before buying products online. I watched YouTube videos about the product for example before buying headphones. I googled it and I read some reviews in different blogs. I saw a couple of YouTube videos and then I decided to order based on their suggestion and rating about the product.”* Person F

Digital content plays a vital role for consumers to take the purchasing decision and the data shows that all the respondents believe it plays a vital role in the purchase decision. Because it becomes easier for customers to understand the pros and cons of the product and to identify whether the product will be able to meet the needs or not. However, most of the respondents think that if it is a major or expensive purchase, customers should have a look to the product by physically in the local store first, so that it would be easier to avoid post-purchase issues and even the usability of the product. That means interviewees are suggesting both online and offline for taking major purchasing decision. But, Interviewee A, B and F think that a customer can make the purchase decision based on the digital contents only.



*“It actually depends on person to person. You know, just 10 to 15 years ago people usually tried to see a product and then make the purchase decision. But right now, there are so much contents available about a product, and so much video guidelines about those products. So, I think people can make their purchase decision based on those available contents.”* Person B

*“if it's expensive item, you are going to buy do not always trust your online contents because sometimes people will confuse you because there may be a hundred there will be a hundred reviews and hundred people will be talking about a hundred things. So, which will confuse you so sometimes maybe if it's an expensive item are I would suggest people to go to the store and check there.”*

Person I

Though customer does research based on comparing price, product quality, and retailer information and then decide to purchase a product, still sometimes customers leave the eCommerce platform after adding the product in the shopping cart, which is also known as non-buying behavior. The data shows that, customers leave the website even after adding the product to the shopping cart for several reasons, such as for better deal in future regarding price and product quality, price change after deciding to purchase the product, unexpected or hidden delivery charge for the product and in some cases the usability of the website.

*“I wanted to buy a small accessory from a website. And suddenly, I felt that I can wait for few days to get a better-quality product. Then I left the website.”*

Person B

*“I was thinking about buying another computer which was a bit less expensive. And it was a refurbished one, so it wasn't a new one. And but the thing was it was only one more computer on the offer and somebody bought it just they bought it just before I got home. And then the price got to higher a bit higher, but it was still lower than this computer than I order it here. But I changed my mind and ordering this one because I think it's better quality.”* Person J

*“Yah, I think it’s almost common things that happen to me. Like last time when I was trying to buy my headphone first, I selected amazon to buy headphone. Almost everything is done, like only payment is left that time I saw that the delivery charge is higher than my expectation, that’s why I had to switch another platform to buy the headphone.”* Person K

Besides this, almost all the respondents think that the design and usability of the website is a matter for choosing the platform for the transaction. Because it represents the company as well as the retailer where customers can feel the authenticity of the website for better quality product and service. Even because of the user experience of the website customers go either buying or non-buying behavior. Except for two interviewees (person H and J). Person H thinks that design is not a matter as long as it is usable. But, Person J does not care about the website experience but on product quality only.

*“(....) Definitely I won’t give my data or bank information to any website that looks fake or looks not authentic.”* Person B

*“It creates a certain authenticity on behalf of a company to the consumer. For me, if I see the website that is well designed and contains lot of information to me, I think that would be more authentic.”* Person D

*“For me it means a lot. Because I think it's one of the simple indicators of whether the website is real or fake. If it’s really shitty design or with the random logos and everything then there's the indicator that that could be a scam.”* Person F

*“(....) So usually I choose those websites which are quite usable and smooth enough. But even if the website looks really bad and if it works fine then I am ok with it. It doesn't take much time.”* Person H

*Post-purchase behavior:* This is the last stage of customers journey which is based on the experience phase either from product usability or any other support for several

issues from the company. A better experience after sales support directs customers to be loyal to the company and then repurchase several products from the same platform in the future. The data shows that most of the respondents selected an eCommerce platform based on the price, warranty, after-sales support, reputation of the market, availability of the product, accessibility of both online and offline support and even location does not create an issue in future.

*“(....) if I decide to buy electronic product so definitely I am going back to Elisa because they offer the cheapest possible price, at the same time they just ship quickly and they offer the guarantee anywhere around Finland, you don’t need to go to Tampere or Oulu of Elisa, and their approach during selling matters a lot for your experience after the purchase.”* Person A

*“I preferred those brands where I can go physically if I want and also, I can order online. Which is quite accessible for me.”* Person C

*“if I have to buy similar electronic product first, I would go and check Verkkokauppa because it's the biggest online marketplace in Finland. It's all about the reputation of the market. So, my first priority is Verkkokauppa, then I have two other options, Gigantti and Power.”* Person H

*“actually from Amazon Germany because I don't have to pay the tax if it's if I order it within the EU. (...) I was actually looking at the Finnish platforms. I know that Gigantti for example has their own platform you can buy online. But the problem is that the price is much higher than from Germany.”* Person J

## 5.4 Empirical results

This study is focusing on understanding how digital contents are influencing on customers online purchasing behavior as well as the online purchasing process. The theoretical analysis and empirical finding show that the purchasing process in online and offline both follows five-stage of the buying process, but during purchasing decision stage there is a switching tendency among customers if there is anything

wrong with the experience in the website during purchasing action. However, it is still showing the same process as it works offline. In every stage of the purchasing process, whether it is decision making or experience gathering phase, digital content is playing the role either directly or indirectly.

Customers total online purchasing journey is segmented into two phases which is decision making and experience gathering for customers. In the decision-making phase, digital contents play significant impact because customers come to know about new or existing products, gather information regarding all available options, make some comparison and finally make a decision for final purchasing action. However, in the experience phase, digital contents also play some role where the dominant role is coming from the decision-making phase. For example, trust, authenticity, and usability of an eCommerce platform help customers to decide and complete the purchasing action in the fourth stage, where digital contents play a vital role to determine those factors. Later on, customer experience is gathered from product consumption and after-sales service where even customers share feedback based on the experience for future potential customers.

Customers usually get engaged with several types of digital contents to get new updates of innovation and also most of the time during purchasing purpose. However, all type of contents cannot grab the attention of customers unless there are any specific needs. Most of the customers get engaged with video contents to see products review, functionalities and comparison from other reviewers as well as customers, and few of them focus with text contents to learn something more by reading. Most of the time customers prefer to get new contents in the news feeds as well as social media platform which is not planned for everyday task, and among several social media platform YouTube, the video platform, gets more attention where Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram also keep the role in getting customers attention. Along with social media, Google search engine helps to find the best rank content in the search result which also redirects customers into several platforms based on their attraction. The audience expects to get a story from the writer or presenter where an attractive title, key points, themes of the story and sometimes related images are included to make the reading

more attractive. Furthermore, sometimes some reputed content creators get more focus from customers who can build trust among the target audience.

Again, the trend of online purchasing is growing among customers day by day who prefer to purchase from online because of the accessibility of the product from anywhere of the worlds. The eCommerce platform should work on maintaining the trust among customers, quality of the product and security of the information which will build loyalty among customers.

Digital contents are playing a significant role in every stage of purchasing behavior, which starts on creating needs among customers and offering the best customer experience through creating a smooth customer journey for the entire purchasing process.

In the stage of need recognition, digital contents play a role to send the message into customers mind through applying some strategy, such as storytelling text, video content, any news or announcement and sometimes through the sponsored contents in the news feed of potential consumers. Again, promotional sales with discounted price or campaign based on a particular event also create the need for a product though customers might not need that product at all.

When customers get to know about any new product, it creates interest among protentional customers which influence them to dig down for learning more about the product. In this stage, customers either search randomly into the desired platform for any specific problem or need, and get to know about available product or service options to meet the needs even customers search for any specific product whatever they just knew from several sources. Even to learn more about a specific topic, customers get to know some new product to support for that specific area. As a result, those contents somehow convince them to know more about the product.

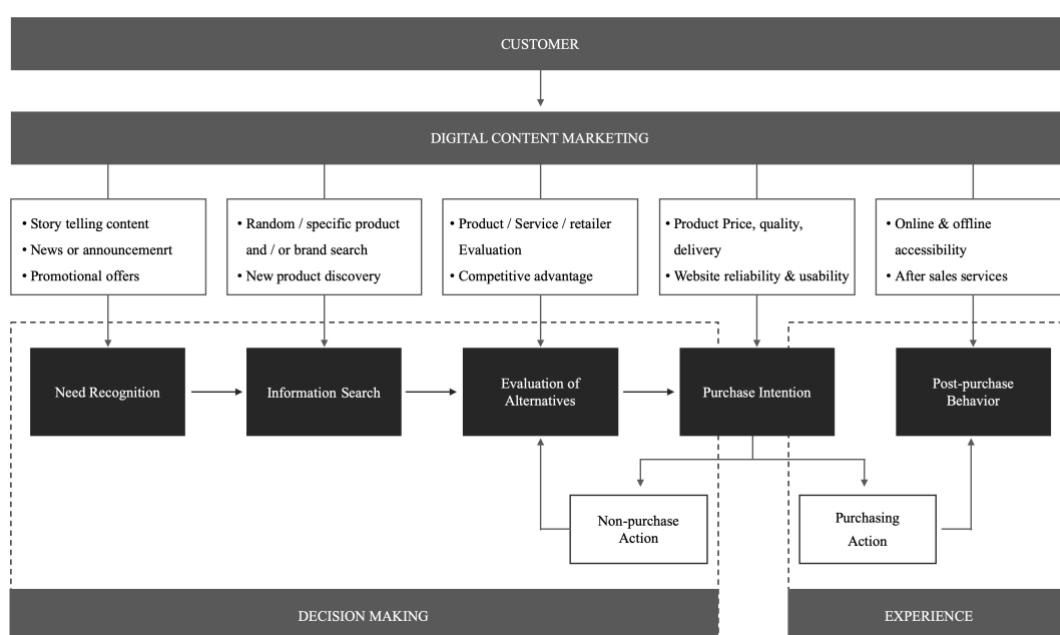
Digital contents play a crucial role to evaluate the alternative whenever customers are interested in comparing several products based on the price or feature category. At the same time, if the product is one and the customer is price-oriented, then the customer

evaluates several retailers as well as eCommerce platforms. The customer compares product or service or even retailers through feedback or reviews from previous customers through specific website or forums or even in the company website which influences the customer to make the competitive analysis and narrow down the choice list into one to make the final purchase decision. However, sometimes customers preselected product purchasing decision is changed because of the influence of digital contents, which convince the customer to change the wrong choice and select the right one for the final consumption.

After comparing products or services or even retailers, now it is time to make the transaction to purchase the product. Theoretical analysis and findings show that in this stage even though customer decided to buy the product but sometimes customers abort the purchasing action in case the purchasing decision is changed, and ultimately it takes them to the previous stage. The purchasing action is aborted because of the unexpected pricing or cost hike issue, product quality issue, customers expectation for a better deal in future with least price and sometimes the reliability issue of the website which influence customers not to purchase the product. At the same time, customers make the purchasing action because of the reliability on the retailers as well as eCommerce platforms, positive customer feedback regarding product quality and the pricing and shipment issue of the product for final consumption. The study shows that digital contents help customers to make the purchasing decision faster which was not possible earlier in the physical store. Because in this information age digital content is playing the role to gather information and take decision accordingly. However, most of the customers prefer to keep physical store for the decision making along with digital content so that post-purchase issues can be avoided regarding product appearance and functionality. Finally, the design and usability of the websites both encourage and discourage customers for making the transaction which is a vital issue to ensure the reliability and authenticity to the customers.

The last stage of the customer journey is post-purchase behavior. It does not mean the end of customers purchasing journey, but based on the experience of actual purchase, it helps to build a long-term customer relationship with loyal customers. Customers select retailers based on the after-sales service of the retailers, such as warranty of the

product, technical support in future, size and reputation of the marketplace, and accessibility in both online and offline for purchase as well as support. In this stage, customers provide feedback on the retailer's reliability as well as the product experience which helps future potential customers to make the purchasing decision. So, maintaining customers experience and offering the best after-sales service is the new opportunity for the retailer to get more customers. Otherwise, it may ruin the potentiality of getting loyal customers. In Figure 4, the impact of digital content marketing is shown in the customers online purchasing process with empirical findings.



**Figure 4: Impact of digital content marketing on consumers online purchasing process including empirical findings**

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

In the last chapter of this study, the main and sub-questions of this research will be answered based on the analysis and findings in the previous chapters. Later on, theoretical contribution and the managerial implication will be analyzed based on the results. And finally, limitation and future research opportunities will be indicated.

This study aims at understanding the impact of digital contents on customers online purchasing behavior. To make a clear understanding of the main question of this study will focus on *how several types of digital contents create positive impact on online purchasing behavior*. The main question will identify and determine fundamental techniques of creation and distribution of different types of digital contents, that will create interest among customers and engage them for the decision making in the online purchasing platform. To support the main question there are four sub-questions. The first sub-question will provide a clear understanding of the *key elements of digital contents* that creates interest among target audiences to click and view the digital content. The second sub-question will determine the essential *type of digital contents that engage* the target audience. The third sub-question will determine *the strategies to create convincing and trustworthy digital contents* so that the target audience can evaluate as authentic content. Furthermore, the fourth sub-question will evaluate *the online purchasing process* so that a digital marketer understands the whole customer journey regarding product or service.

### 6.1 Findings and answers to the research questions

To answer the main research question, it is important to answer sub-questions first, so that a clear picture can be drawn to answer the main research question.

First sub-question - *What are the core elements of digital contents?*: The elements of digital contents make the contents well-presented and in a structured way. Research findings show that the target audiences are mostly concerned about videos and blog texts. That is why the essential elements are described based on those findings. *For video contents*, the title should not be generic, that means attractive and unique to get



the attention, and the thumbnail image of the content should send the message of the contents at first sight. The presentation of the content should be like storytelling and key points should be indicated initially to make the audience interested in watching the video till the last seconds. The color and visualization should be simple not that much flashy. On the other hand, *for the blog contents*, the unique and attractive title creates interest among the target audience to click the link. The description should be pointed out in numerical style as well as bullet points and related images should be used with the text to make the understanding clearer. However, the usability and visualization of the content, as well as the website, is also a matter to save the link in the audience bookmarks list. *For both of the content*, the target audience should be kept in mind during producing the content because it will help to ensure the value and quality of the content. Moreover, the length of the content should not be measured either long or short; it should last until the in-depth information is provided to give a clear picture of the context.

Second sub-question - *What type of content(s) create more engagement?*: The engagement of the content depends on several factors. If it focuses only types of contents, which are produced and distributed into several platform, there are several types of contents which get more engagement from target audiences. The analysis and findings show that the most engaging content is video which is easier to get information and compare products. The video not only shows the product information but also offers products functionality and visual feeling. However, after video contents, few more contents also get customers engagement such as- blog texts, customer feedbacks, and forum discussions. The most engaging platforms, for customers' as well as audiences, are social media platforms especially YouTube, and then Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit. Besides this, if it is based on the purpose, there are two types of contents, which is structured and unstructured. In the structured way, the audience prefers to keep any specific time during a day to learn new things and track the trend of technology. Most of the time for the structured purpose, audience prefer to visit any specific website or blog or to any content creator's channel to see the latest update of the contents. On the other hand, for the unstructured purpose, the audience gets the content for any specific need or get the contents in the newsfeed of several social media

platforms. If any content is interesting, then it influences to visit and get engaged with the content.

Third sub-question - *How type of contents motivates customers to gain trust?*: The trustworthiness of the content depends on the content creator or source of the content. Content can be produced either company side known as BGC and also from user and blogger side known as UGC. BGCs only provide company product even the positive side of the product where UGCs provide both positive and negative side of the product and compare with similar categories product. That is why most of the customer, take UGCs as authentic rather than BGCs. However, customers review is considered as trustworthy and nonbiased when both positive and negative side is mentioned and, in some cases, shared pictures as a proof of purchase, make the authenticity stronger. Besides this, there are some criteria to trust a blogger who produces UGCs. The content creator has to be publicly traceable to learn more about the person, the reputation and in-depth knowledge of the person will influence the target audience to accept and trust those contents. However, if it comes to several types of content, then trustworthiness differs from content to content. Video contents are trustworthy when it visualizes the product practically, describes the functionality of the product with pro and cons, and the number of views, comments, and shares is higher which shows the engagement and trustworthiness of the content. Besides this, blog contents are considered as trustworthy, when the number of sharing is higher, the use of connecting language ensures a clearer understanding of the content and the style of storytelling creates emotional attachment. Moreover, the findings show that the consumer side is always trustworthy to the audience. Because customers' review on the product page, the comment section on the blog and video, and discussion in the forum always help the audience to understand the real scenario about a product or any topic where both pros and cons are discussed among customers which build trustworthiness to the target audience.

Fourth sub-question - *What is the process of online purchasing decision making?*: The fourth and final sub-question represents the online purchasing process which represents the customer's journey to consume a product or service. The study shows that online purchasing follows five-stage of the purchasing process which is similar to

the offline purchasing process. However, in the fourth stage “purchase intention” customers sometimes leave the shopping cart without doing purchasing action. Because of some unexpected issues raised during the purchasing action such as price hike, revealing of the extra hidden cost, the expectation for the better deal in future with a better-quality product, and even sometimes the complex purchasing process of the website. The total purchasing process is segmented into two phases which are decision making and experience gathering phase. In the decision-making segment, customers understand the needs, collect information based on the need and evaluate alternatives either products or retailers perspective. On the other hand, the experience segment represents purchasing action and post-purchase behavior. In this phase, customers gather experience based on product value and after-sales service from the company. This experience directs customers to share their opinion and experience into several media which influence customers repurchase habit and future potential customers for the product or service.

The main question - *How several types of digital contents create positive impact on online purchasing behavior?*: The main question of this study focuses on understanding how several types of digital contents are motivating customers to do the transaction in the online platform where digital contents will help into several stages of the purchasing process. The findings of the research show that digital contents are effective mostly into almost all the stages, but for the fourth stage (purchasing intention), the effect is coming differently. In the *need recognition stage*, digital content influence customers to understand the problem through storytelling, the announcement of innovation or any promotional offer so that it creates some interest among customers. Blogs, videos and some discussion forums play a significant role in this stage. When customers understand the problem and try to solve the problem, *the information search stage* starts. Because to satisfy the need, the customer starts to search for the related product or service. Research showed that customers used to search randomly over the search engine to find out the information about the product. In this stage, customers get to know either new product from a new brand or new product from an existing brand. So, customers try to understand the functionality of the product by searching for information. In the *evaluation stage*, the customer evaluates either similar category product based on price, quality and functionality

based on the need or if they determine for only one product, in that case, customers start to evaluate retailers based on their reliability and after sales service of the product. In this stage, digital content plays a crucial role. Because customers compare products side by side into the website or start to watch videos prepared by dedicated bloggers or even read blog posts and customers review about the product quality to meet the need. After comparing, customers start to benchmark based on the competitive advantage. In the *purchasing intention stage*, customers sometimes get demotivated because of the sudden price hike or revealing of any hidden cost, even sometimes the complex process of purchasing in the website which impacts customers to abort the transaction and leave the website. However, because of the reliability and trustworthiness, customers get interested in making the transaction on the website. Digital contents such as reliability test or customers feedback motivate customers to do the purchase action. In the final stage of the buying process, *post-purchase behavior* indicates the after-sales service and future support from the retailer. Customers share their experience into several platforms which affect future customers purchasing behavior, and the satisfied customer does the repurchasing behavior for the retailer. So digital contents are influencing in every stage of online purchasing process which builds trustworthiness, loyalty, and reliability among customers towards the eCommerce platform.

## **6.2 Theoretical contribution**

This study analyzed the impact of digital contents into online purchasing behavior where digital contents work as motivating factors for customers. Prior studies are contributed from several perspectives.

This thesis was conducted based on Kotler's five-stage buying process and found that the purchasing process for both online and offline are almost same which supports the study of Comegys et al. (2006) and Thirumalai and Sinha (2011).

However, the study evaluated the importance of eWOM shared on social media platform where the co-creation of contents by both the brand and customers affects on

customers purchasing decision making. These findings support the study of “Information Acceptance Model” by Erkan & Evans (2016).

Based on the research findings, UGCs are more trustworthy and popular among customers rather than BGCs which influence on customers purchasing decision. This result matches with Scholz et al. (2013).

Another finding reveals that video contents create most engagement compared to other contents which are less time-consuming which supports the research of Jayasingh et al. (2018) and Standberry (2018). Besides this, YouTube is the most used platform for video contents; however, Smith (2012), Barger et al. (2016) and Simon (2016) found the same result.

The result of this research shows that most of the prospect customers consider customer review as the authentic source to decide for purchasing decision because customers share both positive and negative side of the product or service. This finding supports the study of Mudambi & Schuff (2010), Liu et al. (2011), Chen et al. (2011). Filieri (2016) also supported this and indicated that a customer review or content regarding product or service should have both positive and negative side which minimize the biasness and increase the trustworthiness.

This study discovered that the trustworthiness of the content depends on the content creator or source of the content, writing style, the storytelling of the theme, and proof of purchase that supports Filieri (2016). Moreover, the reputation and image of the blogger is a fact of trust which indirectly supports influencers who works on sharing contents to motivate them and make it trustworthy. Gottbrecht (2017) showed the importance of influencers for DCM.

For the essential elements of digital contents, attractive heading, using visual elements, understanding targeting audience, storytelling of key themes, the length based on the need of describing the theme are the essential elements for making the digital content well-structured which goes with the statement and findings of Bhargava (2016), Hall (2019), Content Marketing Association (n.d.), and Barker (2017).

However, according to this research, the usability of the website increases the reliability of the website and inspire to accomplish the purchasing action, which closely matches with Close & Kukar-Kinney (2010), Im et al. (2010) and Zhang et al. (2019).

### **6.3 Managerial implications**

This study also contributes to the managerial perspective. A digital marketer should focus on creating customer value by offering storytelling content which will educate them about the brand. Besides this, to create the digital content it is vital to understand the audience and the essential elements of digital contents so that customers interest can be maintained.

As the target audience takes the UGCs as trustworthy and authentic, it would be wise for the digital marketer to inspire customers and bloggers to produce and share digital contents based on their feedback. Sometimes, influencer hiring can also work on the DCM campaign so that customer engagement can be ensured. However, the digital marketer should focus on creating video contents which will tell the story not the product message and ultimately offer emotional value to the customer based on their needs and demand.

This study shows that social media is a great platform to create and distribute digital contents which indicate the importance of social media to select as a platform. This result supports that finding of Erkan & Evans (2016). So, the digital marketer should engage with customers' in the social media platform where the digital contents will be co-created with users.

For the purchasing process, it would be wise for the digital marketer to understand the psychology of customers so that the right contents can be offered based on the customers' needs related to the company product. The manager should monitor customers journey so that it would be possible to make a long-term business deal with customers through successful purchasing action. As customers consider company reputation and after sales service of the company during purchasing decision, it would

be the responsibility of digital marketer to increase the reputation of the company as well as eCommerce platform through providing support to the customers.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the research**

There are several limitations to this research. This study took the age group of 25 to 34 for data collection through the semi-structured interview. Because according to the previous research data, this age group purchases electronic products most especially from online. However, there are some other age groups who also purchase from online. So, this is a kind of limitation for this study.

Again, for the data collection, the convenience sampling method is used for this study, which is also a limitation for this research. Though convenience sampling offers accessibility among the respondents to collect data, some researchers prefer another method to obtain more reliable data.

Besides this, the product category selected for this research was electronic products. However, this is not the only product purchased from the online marketplace.

Finally, the data collection for this study was the semi-structured interview, which was conducted based on qualitative research.

So, to avoid the limitation this study offers some suggestions in future research which might give better findings.

#### **6.5 Future research**

This goal of this study was to understand the impact of several types of digital contents over customers the online purchasing behavior as well as online purchasing process.

So, in future several research areas can be focused. Digital content marketing can be researched in narrower perspective though it is a broad topic in one umbrella to understand consumer behavior and setting digital marketing plan. Besides this, digital

content can be focused on artificial intelligence perspective so that digital marketer can take the right strategies to build a long-term customer relationship.

However, to avoid the limitation in the research, Generation Z can also be focused who are the growing generation now a day to conduct research. Besides this, there are lots of product purchased from eCommerce platforms, for example, clothing, cosmetics, jewelry and so on. So those products areas can also be focused on the research. Again, different data collection method can be applied such as focus group. Moreover, the sampling method can be different from this research, so that the reliability of the data also can be checked.



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## APPENDICES

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

- Personal information
  - Sex
  - Age
  - Occupation
- Digital content
  - Types of contents you are concerned about? & your area of interests?
  - Habit of reading / watching digital contents? Why?
    - How often do you read blog text?
    - How many videos do you watch every day?
    - How often do you read / watch product review?
    - Others?
  - How do you find those contents?
  - How do you evaluate and choose the best contents?
- Online Purchasing
  - Do you purchase from online? How often? Why?
  - What type of products do you buy mostly?
  - Mention one electronic product that you purchased recently from online.
  - What types of description do you consider to choose a product?
  - How do you choose the marketplace to purchasing online?
  - What are the threats do you feel for online shopping? Do you have any experience on that?
  - How does the readability, good design and user experience of a website help you to purchase products online?
  - What factors help you to take decision for purchasing online?
- Digital Content Marketing and Online purchasing decision
  - What type of contents take your attention and make you engaged?
  - what type of contents build trust on you? How? What are the factors do you think makes digital contents trustworthy to its reader?

- How digital contents helped you to choose a product from online marketplace?
- How digital content help you discover new product, even you are not aware of the product?
- What are the important elements of digital content? And / or, how should a content creator present digital contents to get more attraction from you?
  - About blog text?
  - About video content?
  - Others?
- What is your online purchasing process? How do you start to go to the final purchasing decision?
  - why did you feel need?
  - How do you search information for a product?
  - How do you compare products? And how digital contents helps you for this task?
  - What else do you do before determining to purchase a product?
- How digital contents affect you to change your mind for purchasing decision? (e.g. changing the product to another one)
- What is the positive and/or negative side of purchasing a product online only depending on online contents? Should a customer completely depend on digital contents to take purchasing decision?
- Anything else to add?